

FACT SHEET:

Department of Health Issues Precautions for Food Safety

In the event of loss of electricity, it is important to take careful precautions to ensure food safety. The risk of food poisoning is heightened when refrigerators and ovens are inaccessible.

Discard any food that has been at room temperature for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture. Remember, ***When in doubt, throw it out!***

Practice safe food handling and prevent foodborne illness by following simple steps:

- A full cooler will maintain its cold temperature longer than one that is partially filled, so it is important to pack plenty of extra ice or freezer packs to ensure a constant cold temperature.
- If available, 25 pounds of dry ice will keep a 10-cubic-foot freezer below freezing for 3-4 days. Use care when handling dry ice, and wear dry, heavy gloves to avoid injury.
- Thawed food can usually be eaten if it is still "refrigerator cold," or re-frozen if it still contains ice crystals.
- Eggs and other foods need to be stored in 40 degrees Fahrenheit or slightly below. Do not eat foods that may have spoiled.
- Wash your hands before preparing or eating food, after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, after handling uncooked food, after playing with a pet, after handling garbage, after tending to someone who is sick or injured, after blowing your nose, and after coughing or sneezing.
- Fight cross-contamination – the transfer of harmful bacteria to food from other foods, cutting boards or utensils. Never place any type of food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry or seafood.
- When grilling foods, preheat the coals on your grill for 20 – 30 minutes, or until the coals are lightly coated with ash. Never use a grill indoors.
- Use a meat thermometer to ensure that food reaches a safe internal temperature.
 - ⌚ Hamburgers and ground poultry should be cooked to 160° F.
 - ⌚ Poultry parts: 170° F.
 - ⌚ Roasts, steaks and other large cuts of beef: 145° F. (rare) and 160° F. (medium)
 - ⌚ Fish – should be cooked until the meat is opaque and flakes easily.

For additional food safety information, call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at

1-888-674-6854. Food safety specialists (both English and Spanish speaking) are available from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. EDT on weekdays year-round. Or, for more food safety information visit www.fsis.usda.gov, www.fightbac.org, or www.eatturkey.com/consumer/main.html.