



The Power of Preparation

By Anne Prince

With severe weather events occurring more frequently, now more than ever, it makes sense to be prepared. During a prolonged power outage or other emergency, this means having enough food, water, and supplies to last at least a few days.

In honor of National Preparedness Month in September, I want to remind members of our community about the power of preparation. While you don't have to achieve a "doomsday prepper" level of preparedness, there are several practical steps you can take to keep you and your family safe.

Even at a modest level, preparation can help reduce stress,

anxiety, and lessen the impact of an emergency event. We recommend starting with the basics.

Here are general guidelines recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency:

- Assemble a grab-and-go disaster kit; include items like nonperishable food, water (one gallon per person, per day), diapers, batteries, flashlights, prescription medications, first-aid kit, battery-powered radio, and phone chargers
- Develop a plan for communicating with family and friends (i.e., via text, social media, third party, etc.)
- Have some extra cash available; during a power



As part of National Preparedness Month, make preparations to keep you and your family safe during severe weather events or extended power outages.

ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY DER02084

outage, electronic card readers and cash machines may not work

- Store important documents (birth certificates, property deed, etc.) in safe place away from home (for example, a bank safe deposit box)
- Keep neighbors and coworkers apprised of your emergency plans
- Fill your car with gas
- Organize your supplies so they are together in an easily accessible location that family members know about

Caring for vulnerable family members

If you have older family members or those with special needs, make sure they have enough medication and supplies for a few days. If they don't live with you, arrange for a neighbor to check in on them. If a severe weather event is expected, consider having your relative stay with you if feasible, otherwise call them daily.

If you have an infant or young children, make certain you have ample formula, diapers, medication and other supplies on hand to weather an outage lasting several days or more.

Keeping four-legged family members safe

For families with pets, having a plan in place in the event of a prolonged outage or an emergency will help reduce worry and

stress especially if you need to make a decision during an emergency.

- Bring pets indoors at the first sign of a storm or other emergency; they can become disoriented and frightened during severe weather and may wander off during an emergency
- Microchip your pet and ensure the contact information is up to date
- Store pet medical records on a USB drive or in an easy-to-remember location
- Create an emergency kit for pets (include shelf-safe food, bottled water, medications, and other supplies)

Copper Valley Electric cares about your safety. Planning for an emergency situation today can give you more confidence to deal with severe weather and potential outages in the future. For more tips, visit cvea.org. ■

Anne Prince writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.

Keep Food Safe When the Power Goes Out

By Abby Berry

Severe winds, lightning and even squirrels can temporarily cause the power to go out. We understand power outages of any length can be frustrating, especially when your fridge is stocked with perishable foods.

Extended power outages are rare, but when they occur, it's important to understand food safety measures to take to avoid illness.

Here are a few food safety tips to keep in mind before, during and after a power outage.

Before an outage

A good rule of thumb is to keep an emergency supply kit on hand. Be sure to include nonperishable food items like bottled water, powdered milk, canned goods, cereal and protein bars in your emergency kit.

If you have advance warning that an outage is possible, fill a cooler with ice—just in case the outage spans several hours. Having a cooler ready to go can buy extra time for your refrigerated, perishable items.

During an outage

If an outage occurs, do not open the refrigerator or freezer unless *absolutely* necessary. An unopened refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours. A half-full freezer will keep food frozen for about 24 hours and a full freezer for about 48 hours. If it looks like the power outage will last longer than four hours, move your important perishable items to an ice-filled cooler.

After an outage

If refrigerated foods have been exposed to temperatures higher than 40 degrees for more than two hours, the American Red Cross recommends discarding the items.

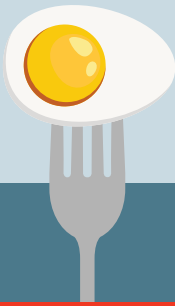
If any foods have an unusual color, odor or texture, they should be thrown away. While most perishable foods should be thrown out after an extended outage, there are a few items that are safe to consume after a two-hour exposure to 40+ degrees:

- hard cheeses that are properly wrapped
- butter or margarine that is properly wrapped
- taco, barbecue and soy sauces
- peanut butter, jelly, mustard, ketchup and relish

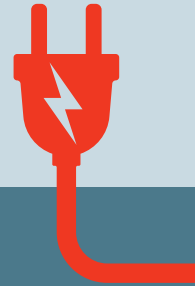
The best way to avoid illness from spoiled food during or after an outage is to follow the four-hour rule of thumb. After an outage, always smell and inspect foods before consuming and remember: when in doubt, throw it out.

To learn more about food safety after an emergency, visit www.ready.gov/food. ■

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Eat Safe Food after a Power Outage



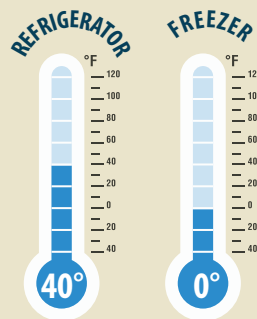
Refrigerated or frozen foods may not be safe to eat after the loss of power. Find out what you can do to keep food safe during a power outage, and when you need to throw away food that could make you sick.

Before

Keep appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer.

The refrigerator should be at 40°F or below.

The freezer should be at 0°F or below.

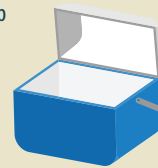


Prepare for emergencies or natural disasters



Freeze containers of water and gel packs to help keep your food at 40°F or below.

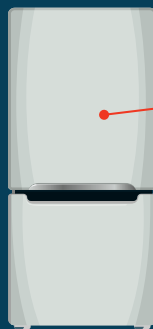
Have a cooler handy.



Buy dry ice or block ice to keep food cold in the refrigerator if the power might be out for a long time.

During

KEEP
Refrigerator
& Freezer Doors
CLOSED



4
Hours
in a
Refrigerator



48
Hours
in a
FULL
Freezer



24
Hours
in a
HALF-FULL
Freezer

After 4 hours without power, put refrigerated perishable foods in a cooler. Add ice or another cold source to keep them at 40°F or below.

After

Never taste food to determine if it is safe to eat. When in doubt, throw it out.



- **Throw out perishable food** in your refrigerator (meat, fish, cut fruits and vegetables, eggs, milk, and leftovers) **after 4 hours without power** or a cold source.
- Throw out any food with an **unusual odor, color, or texture.**
- **Check temperatures of food** kept in coolers or your refrigerator with a cold source. Throw out food above 40°F.
- If you have an appliance thermometer in your freezer, check to see if it is still at 40 °F or below.
- You can **safely refreeze or cook** thawed frozen food **that still contains ice crystals** or is at 40 °F or below.



www.cdc.gov/foodsafety

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