

Food safety after power loss

ACTION CHECKLIST

Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. Without power, a refrigerator keeps food safe for about 4 hours; a full freezer about 48 hours and a half-full freezer about 24 hours. Never taste food to test safety. Use official discard guidance and a thermometer.

[] Note the time

Record when power failed and avoid opening cold storage.

[] Use temperatures

Check appliance and food temperatures when safe; appearance and smell do not prove safety.

[] Discard risky food

After 4 hours without power or another cold source, discard refrigerated perishables such as meat, eggs and leftovers.

[] Check frozen food

Food with ice crystals or at 40°F or below can generally be refrozen or cooked; use official food-specific charts.

WATCH FOR

Do not serve questionable food to people or pets.

IF HELP IS UNAVAILABLE

Track the time power stopped and use a fridge thermometer if available. If time or temperature is unknown, discard suspect perishable food and use shelf-stable food. Spend scarce fuel on safe water and essential cooking rather than trying to rescue unsafe food.

Updated 2026-10-02 | Civilian educational guidance. Seek qualified help when reachable and safe; do not delay immediate protective action.

Full guide: <https://ospreyzero.com/emergencies/food-safety-outage/>

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