



**simcoe
muskoka**
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Tel: 705-721-7520
Toll free: 1-877-721-7520
www.simcoemuskokahealth.org
Your Health Connection

Food Safety: Keeping Food Safe during a Power Failure

During a power failure, the foods you keep in the refrigerator and freezer may become unsafe to eat. Here is some advice to help in making sure your food is stored safely if the power goes out:

Food in your refrigerator:

Keep the refrigerator door closed to maintain the temperature inside.

- Without power, the refrigerator section will keep foods cool for 4-6 hours — if the door is kept closed.
- If possible, add bags of ice to the refrigerator to keep temperatures cooler for a longer period.
- When in doubt, throw it out! If you are not sure whether an item is spoiled, play it safe and throw it out. Eating unsafe foods may cause food-borne illness.
- Throw out perishable foods such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs and leftovers that have been at temperatures above 4°C for more than two hours.
- Throw out any food that is off-colour or has an off odor as soon as possible.
- Contact your doctor or pharmacist for information about proper storage of medication that requires

refrigeration, such as insulin.

- See charts below for a list of basic food items and how to handle them if the power goes out.

Food in your freezer:

Keep the freezer door closed to maintain the temperature inside.

- Without power, an upright or chest freezer that is completely full will keep food frozen for about two days. A half-full freezer will keep food frozen for one day.
- Avoid opening and closing the freezer to check the food inside.
- If possible, add bags of ice to the freezer to help to keep the temperatures cooler for a longer period of time.
- If the power is going to be off for an extended period of time, consider taking food to a freezer belonging to a friend or neighbour – if they have power!
- Partial thawing and refreezing may reduce the

quality of some food, but the food will remain safe to eat. See the charts below for a list of basic food items and how to handle them if the power goes out. Here are some helpful tips to ensure your frozen foods are safe to eat:

- Take the guess work out of knowing if the temperature inside the refrigerator and freezer are safe. Consider putting an accurate indicating thermometer in each section.
- Temperature ranges should be between 0°C - 4°C for the refrigerator section and -18°C or colder for the freezer section.
- Always wrap raw meat, poultry or fish very well and place in the coldest section of your refrigerator.
- Foods that have thawed in the freezer may be re-frozen if they still contain ice crystals or are at 4°C or below. You will have to evaluate each item separately.

REFRIGERATOR FOODS:

**When held above 4°C for over two hours*

MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD*	
Fresh or leftover meat, poultry, fish, or seafood	Discard
Thawing meat or poultry	Discard
Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, or egg salad	Discard
Gravy, stuffing	Discard
Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef	Discard
Pizza – with any topping	Discard
Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated"	Discard

EGGS*	
Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products	Discard
Custards and puddings	Discard

SAUCES, SPREADS, JAMS*	
Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish (If above 4°C for over 8 hrs)	Discard
Peanut butter	Safe
Jelly, relish, taco, barbecue & soy sauce, mustard, ketchup, olives	Safe
Worcestershire sauce	Discard
Fish sauces (oyster sauce)	Discard
Hoisin sauce	Discard
Vinegar-based dressings, opened	Safe
Creamy-based dressings, opened	Discard
Spaghetti sauce, opened jar	Discard

PIES, PASTRY*	
Cream-filled pastries	Discard
Pies – custard, cheese-filled, or chiffon	Discard
Pies – fruit	Safe

CASSEROLES, SOUPS, STEWS*	
All	Discard

CHEESE*	
Soft cheeses: blue/bleu, roquefort, brie, camembert, cottage, cream, edam, monterey jack, ricotta, mozzarella, muenster, neufchatel	Discard
Hard cheeses: cheddar, colby, swiss, parmesan, provolone, romano	Safe
Processed cheeses	Safe
Shredded cheeses	Discard
Low-fat cheeses	Discard
Grated parmesan, romano, or combination (in can or jar)	Safe

FRUITS*	
Fresh-cut, fresh fruit salad	Discard
Opened fruit juices or canned fruit	Safe
Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried or candied fruits, dates	Safe

BREADS, CAKES, COOKIES, PASTA*	
Breads, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads	Safe
Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough	Discard
Cooked pasta, spaghetti	Discard
Pasta salads with mayo or vinaigrette	Discard
Fresh pasta	Discard
Cheesecake	Discard
Breakfast foods: waffles, pancakes, bagels	Safe

VEGETABLES*	
Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices	Safe
Greens, pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged	Discard
Vegetables, raw	Safe
Vegetables, cooked	Discard
Vegetable juice, opened	Discard
Baked potatoes	Discard
Commercial garlic in oil	Discard
Potato salad	Discard

Always remember – When in doubt, throw it out!

FROZEN FOODS:

****If food product still contains ice crystals and feels cold like it would under refrigeration, you may be able to refreeze the product***

*****Pertains to those foods held above 4°C for over two hours***

MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD	ICE CRYSTALS*	THAWED**
Beef, veal, lamb, pork and ground meats	Refreeze	Discard
Poultry and ground poultry	Refreeze	Discard
Variety meats (liver, kidney, heart, chitterlings)	Refreeze	Discard
Casseroles, stews, soups	Refreeze	Discard
Fish, shellfish, breaded seafood products	Refreeze. However there will be some texture and flavour loss.	Discard

DAIRY	ICE CRYSTALS*	THAWED**
Milk	Refreeze. May lose some texture	Discard
Eggs (out of shell) and egg products	Refreeze	Discard
Icecream, frozen yogurt	Discard	Discard
Cheese (soft and semi-soft)	Refreeze. May lose some texture.	Discard
Hard cheeses	Refreeze	Refreeze
Shredded cheeses	Refreeze	Discard
Cheesecake	Refreeze	Discard

FRUITS	ICE CRYSTALS*	THAWED**
Juices	Refreeze	Refreeze. Discard if mould, yeasty smell or sliminess develops.
Home or commercially packaged	Refreeze. Texture and flavour changes.	Refreeze. Discard if mould, yeasty smell or sliminess develops

VEGETABLES	ICE CRYSTALS*	THAWED**
Juices	Refreeze	Discard if above 40C for six hours.
Home, commercially packaged, blanched	Refreeze. Texture and flavour changes.	Discard if above 40C for six hours.

BREADS, PASTRIES	ICE CRYSTALS*	THAWED**
Breads, rolls, muffins (without custard fillings)	Refreeze	Refreeze
Cakes, pies, pastries with custard or cheese filling	Refreeze	Discard
Pie crusts, commercial and homemade bread dough	Refreeze. Some quality loss may occur	Refreeze. Quality loss is considerable

OTHER	ICE CRYSTALS*	THAWED**
Casseroles –pasta, rice-based	Refreeze	Discard
Flour, cornmeal, nuts	Refreeze	Refreeze
Breakfast items – waffles, pancakes, bagels	Refreeze	Refreeze
Frozen meal, entrée, specialty items (pizza, sausage and biscuit, meat pie, convenience foods)	Refreeze	Discard

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