



## CHCHD News

*Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department*

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### **Save it or toss it? Review these power outage food safety recommendations.**

Knowing whether food is safe to eat during and after a loss of power is essential to reduce the risk of foodborne illness and to minimize discarding food that may be safe to eat. The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department wants you to be aware of food safety recommendations if you are or have been without power.

Foods requiring refrigeration should always be kept at or below 40°F, or frozen at 0°F or below. During a power outage the temperature in a refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours **if the door is not opened**. A full freezer will keep food frozen approximately 48 hours (half full freezer only 24 hours) **if the door is not opened**.

Once power is restored you will need to determine the safety of your food. The following general guidelines should be followed after a power outage:

- Using an appliance thermometer is the best way to find out how cold the food has been kept. Check the temperature when the power comes back on. If the freezer thermometer reads 40°F or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine its safety. You can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40 °F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was out for no more than 4 hours and the refrigerator door was kept shut. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs or leftovers) that has been above 40°F for two hours or more.

Preparation for the possibility of power interruption is the best way to stay healthy and safe. Power loss can occur anytime due to storms, flooding or other non-weather related events. Part of having an emergency plan includes keeping a safe food supply for you and your family. This should include non-perishable foods such as canned goods and other packaged foods that do not require refrigeration. Having a non-electric can opener may also be essential during a power outage.

Contact your pharmacist if you are concerned about medications which are stored in the refrigerator. For more information on food safety, contact Environmental Health at 209-8110, or visit <http://health.hamiltontn.org/EnvHealth/FG.aspx>, [food.safety.gov](http://food.safety.gov) or [CDC emergency preparedness](http://CDC.emergency.preparedness).

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