

FOOD SAFETY for Weather Disasters

Preparing for a weather disaster takes planning and time. That preparation should include taking steps to keep your food supply safe during and after a storm, vital in helping to preventing a foodborne illness. But, where do you start?

We can help.

Use the following food safety tips as an easy guide to keep you and your family safe.

BEFORE THE WEATHER EVENT

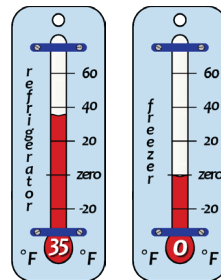
Prepare to be self-reliant for at least seven days after the storm. Your kit and supplies should include:

- High-energy, low-salt, and nonperishable food stocks.
- At least one gallon of drinking water per person per day, plus water for cooking and washing.
- Manual can opener.

Prepare for a power outage

Food

- Set refrigerator temperature to less than 35 degrees Fahrenheit, adjusting by a degree or two each day. Set freezer to 0 F or less.
- Freeze refrigerated leftovers, milk, fresh meat, hard cheeses and other such items.
- Freeze water in plastic containers and cans 3-4 days before the storm, and fill freezer spaces.
- Stock-up on homemade ice and freeze gel packs to use in your refrigerator, freezer, or coolers.
- Buy appliance thermometers for the refrigerator and freezer.
- Group foods together in the refrigerator and freezer to help foods stay cold longer.
- Have large, insulated cooler and frozen gel packs ready.
- Find out where dry ice and block ice can be purchased.



Water

If you choose to store water in containers, remember:

- Water should be stored in sanitized food grade containers.*
- Wash containers with soap and hot water.
- Sanitize: 1 teaspoon non-scented household bleach per 1 quart of water.
- Rinse thoroughly with clean water.

* Do not use milk containers to store drinking water!

If your water source becomes compromised, to purify:

- **Boil water for at least 3-4 minutes to kill germs.**
- **Aerate to improve “flat” taste (if needed).**

CAUTION

Unless you know a water supply is safe and clean:

- ⊘ Never drink from it
- ⊘ Never use it to make ice
- ⊘ Never cook with it
- ⊘ Never brush your teeth with it
- ⊘ Never bathe in it
- ⊘ Never use it to clean dishes, utensils, toys or other items

FOOD SAFETY for Weather Disasters (cnt'd)

DURING THE WEATHER EVENT

The refrigerator will remain cold for approximately two to four hours, while a freezer will hold temperature for 24-48 hours. Keep a thermometer in both to check, and keep doors closed as much as possible to limit warming.

If power is (or will be) off more than three hours:

- Transfer food to a cooler and fill with ice or frozen gel packs.
- Make sure there is enough ice to keep food in the cooler at 40 F or below.
- As ice in the cooler melts, add more to hold the temperature.
- Use dry ice or block ice if power will be out for a prolonged period.
 - **Caution: Do not touch dry ice with bare skin or place it in direct contact with food.**
 - Expect to use 2.5-3 pounds of dry ice per cubic foot of freezer.
- Food in the front or door of freezers or will defrost faster than food in the back or bottom.
- Small, thin food packages will defrost faster large, thick items.

Food is safe to consume or refreeze if the freezer temperature is (and has been) 40 F or less or there are ice crystals present on the food.



Image credits:
UF/IFAS, unsplash.com

AFTER THE WEATHER EVENT

Assess all food and decide what foods to keep or discard.

- Do not rely on the look or smell of foods to measure safety.
- **NEVER** taste food to determine its safety.
- Discard temperature-sensitive food if your refrigerator has been without power for more than four hours.

Assess refrigerator, stove and other equipment, plus food prep areas.

When in doubt...



THROW IT OUT!

If power goes out, use foods based on how long they will stay fresh and safe.

- 1** First, use perishable foods and foods from refrigerator (safe for two to four hours).
- 2** Then, use food from freezer (safe for two to four days, if doors remain closed)
- 3** Finally, use available non-perishable foods.



OUTDOOR GRILLS

USE EXTREME CAUTION!

- Use gas or charcoal grills **ONLY OUTSIDE** (in open air), not in the house, garage or other confined space.
- Keep the appropriate fire extinguisher near the grill.
 - Store fuel outside in a well-marked container



LEARN MORE

tiny.cc/ufsaraext_fcs
eventbrite.com/cc/213479

QUESTIONS?

sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/sarasota
sarasota@ifas.ufl.edu
311 or 941.861.5000

UF | IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA


Sarasota County