

Environmental Health

F A S T F A C T S

Food Safety During A Power Failure

Is the food in my fridge and freezer safe?

During a power failure or mechanical breakdown, you should open the fridge or freezer door as little as possible. Food in a fridge will stay cold for several hours provided that the door is kept closed. In the summer, a full freezer will keep food frozen for approximately two days if the freezer is kept closed. If the power outage is expected to be longer than this, move the food to another location such as friend's or relative's house that has power. Transport this food in a cooler to keep it cold (4°C) if it is refrigerated.



What effect does prolonged thawing have on food?

Fruits, fruit juices and fruit pies: Because of their high natural sugar content, they may start to ferment. While this is not a health hazard, the flavour may be undesirable. They are safe to refreeze if they have been at room temperature for less than two hours. However, they may be mushy.

Vegetables: If partly thawed, they can be refrozen, but the flavour and texture may be poor.

Meat and Poultry: Meat and poultry can be refrozen if only partially thawed. However, if the meat, including vacuum-packed meat, has thawed completely and reached room temperature, it should be thrown out.

Cooked Foods: If cooked foods, such as soups or casseroles, have thawed and reached room temperature they should be thrown out.

Can I refreeze food once it is thawed?

This depends on the length of time the food has been thawing, the temperature it has reached, the type of food and the state it is in.

If there are still *ice crystals present* in the food and there is no odor or visible sign of spoilage, then it is safe to refreeze this food quickly. However, the quality may have begun to deteriorate.

If the food is completely thawed and warmed to room temperature, the decision is simple. Freezing breaks down tissue in the food allowing them to be more readily attacked by organisms. These organisms multiply rapidly at room temperature and cause food spoilage that cannot be overcome by refreezing. *Discard any food that has completely thawed and has been at room temperature for an unknown period of time.*

