

# KEEPING FOOD SAFE DURING AN EMERGENCY



## GENERAL INFORMATION

Emergencies happen. When they do, having a plan in place is your best strategy. The guidelines in this brochure provide basic information for procedures to follow after an emergency. They can help reduce foodborne illness during or after floods, fires, power outages or other emergency situations.

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Natural disasters can jeopardize the safety of your food. Food safety strategies can help minimize potential food loss and reduce the risk of foodborne illness.



### KEEP COLD FOOD COLD

Keep meat, poultry, fish and eggs refrigerated at or below 41°F and frozen food at or below 0°F. If the power goes out, keep the refrigerator doors closed as much as possible. Closed refrigerators will keep cold for up to four hours without power. **FREEZER TIP:** A full freezer can maintain temperature for nearly 48 hours.



### USE ICE

Buy dry ice or block ice to keep your refrigerator as cold as possible. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot full freezer for two days.



### PLAN AHEAD

Keep items on hand that don't require refrigeration and can be eaten cold or heated on an outdoor grill. Shelf-stable food, bottled water, canned goods, and boxed or canned milk should be a part of a planned emergency food supply. If needed, have special foods like ready-to-use baby formula or pet food on hand. Remember to replace these items from time to time.



### USE A THERMOMETER

Food thermometers help determine if food is at a safe temperature. Keep appliance thermometers inside the refrigerator and freezer at all times. When the power is out, an appliance thermometer should indicate the temperature in the refrigerator and freezer. Refrigerator temperatures should be 41°F or below and the freezer should be 0°F or below.



## FOOD SAFETY QUESTIONS?

### Call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline

If you have a question about meat, poultry or egg products, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline toll free at **1-888-MPHotline** or **1-888-674-6854**.

The hotline is open year-round Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

EST. Check out the FSIS website at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov).

## Contact us

KDA Food Safety and Lodging  
**785-564-6767**  
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## FAQs

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q:** *Flood waters covered our food stored on shelves and in cabinets. What can I keep and what should I throw out? How should I clean my dishes, pots and pans?*

**A:** Discard all food that came in contact with flood waters, including canned goods. It is impossible to know if containers were damaged or the seal was compromised. Discard wood cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers. Thoroughly wash metal pans, ceramic dishes and utensils with hot soapy water and sanitize them by boiling them in clean water or immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.



**Q:** *We had a fire in our home. Which foods can I keep and what should I throw out?*

**A:** Discard food that was near a fire. Food can be damaged by the heat of the fire, smoke fumes, and chemicals used to fight the fire. Food in cans and jars may appear to be okay, but heat can activate food spoilage bacteria. Dangerous elements include not just the fire itself. Toxic fumes are often released from burning materials, such as plastics and other man-made materials. Discard any raw food or food in permeable packaging stored outside the refrigerator. Food stored in refrigerators or freezers may also be contaminated. Fire-fighting chemicals, like those that come from fire extinguishers, can be toxic and can contaminate food and cookware. Food exposed to chemicals should be thrown away. Cookware exposed to fire-fighting chemicals can be decontaminated by washing in soap and hot water, and then submerging the items for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 teaspoon chlorine bleach per quart of water.



**Q:** *During a power outage, some food in my freezer started to thaw or had thawed. Is the food safe? How long will food in the refrigerator be safe with the power off?*

**A:** Never taste food to determine its safety! You must evaluate each item separately. If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, read the temperature when the power comes back on. If the freezer thermometer reads 41°F or below, it is safe and may be refrozen. Refrigerated food should be safe as long as power is out no more than four hours. Keep the refrigerator doors shut as much as possible. Discard any perishable foods that have been stored above 41°F for two hours or more.



**Q:** *My home was flooded. Should I worry about drinking water safety?*

**A:** Drink only approved or chlorinated water. Consider all water from wells, cisterns and other delivery systems in the disaster area unsafe until tested. If necessary, purchase bottled water until you are certain your water supply is safe. Keep a three-day supply of water or a minimum of three gallons of water per person.



**Q:** *A snowstorm knocked down the power lines; can I put the food from my refrigerator and freezer out in the snow?*

**A:** No. Frozen food can thaw if exposed to the sun's rays. Outside temperatures can vary by hour and outdoor storage will not protect refrigerated and frozen foods. Perishable items could also be exposed to unsanitary conditions or to animals. Rather than put the food outside, consider taking advantage of the cold temperature by making ice. Fill buckets or cans with water and leave them outside to freeze. Put homemade ice in your refrigerator, freezer or coolers.

## LEARN MORE

Protect yourself and your family by learning more about food safety from the following websites:

Kansas Department of Agriculture:  
[agriculture.ks.gov/foodsafety](http://agriculture.ks.gov/foodsafety)

Your Gateway to Federal Food Safety Information:  
[www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)

U. S. Department of Agriculture:  
[www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
[www.cdc.gov/foodsafety](http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety)

Kansas Division of Emergency Management:  
[www.kansastag.gov/KDEM](http://www.kansastag.gov/KDEM)

Ready (A National Readiness Campaign):  
[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

