

**For Immediate Release**

**From: The Branch-Hillsdale St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

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## **Safe Food Handling During Power Outages**

The safety of food may be a problem following any storm where electricity has been interrupted for an extended period of time. The following information is intended to help you judge the safety of your food after a power outage.

### **Frozen Food**

As long as power is interrupted, keep the freezer door closed as much as possible. Food in most full, free-standing freezers will be safe for about 2 days and half-full freezers for about 1 day.

If power is going to be out for several days, it is certainly safest to move food to another freezer. To move food safely, wrap it in newspapers or blankets, or place it in insulated containers. If you can not relocate your food, use dry ice to assist in keeping food frozen. Twenty-five pounds of dry ice should hold a 10-cubic foot full freezer 2 to 4 days. Covering the freezer with blankets, quilts, or crumpled newspaper will also aid in keeping cold air inside.

If food has started to thaw, you will have to evaluate each item separately to see what can safely be kept. For specific food items to save or throw out, refer to charts located on our web site at [www.bhsj.org/eh/eh\\_food.html](http://www.bhsj.org/eh/eh_food.html)

Generally, it is safe to refreeze foods that still contain ice crystals. Raw meats and poultry from the freezer can usually be refrozen without too much quality loss. Prepared foods, vegetables and fruits can normally be refrozen, but there may be some quality loss. Fruits and fruit juices can be refrozen with minimal quality loss.

### **Refrigerated Food**

Food in a refrigerator is generally safe if the power was out for no more than a few hours. Do not rely on the appearance or odor of a food to determine if it is safe. Bacteria that cause foodborne illness can multiply rapidly on perishable foods that have been between 40°F-140°F for more than 2 hours.

Be very careful with meat, poultry, and fish products or any food containing milk, cream, sour cream or soft cheese. When in doubt, it is usually best to throw it out.

Visit our web site at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) for additional information about refrigerated and frozen foods, when to save and when to throw out.