

## Food Safety during a Power Outage



During and after a prolonged power failure, the foods you keep in the refrigerator and freezer may become unsafe to eat. Bacteria can build up in potentially hazardous foods which may cause foodborne illness.

**Should a power outage occur in a food premises, the owner/operator should contact SWPH immediately for further direction.**

### During a Power Outage:

Do not open the refrigerator/freezer, unless absolutely necessary, to maintain cold temperatures.

- A full freezer will keep food frozen for about 48 hours.
- A half full freezer will keep food frozen for about 24 hours.
- An unopened refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours.

If you know that a power failure will last for a long period of time,

#### **Private homes can consider the following options:**

- Ask to use a friend or family member's refrigerator or freezer nearby who has power.
- If available, add ice to the refrigerator to keep the temperature cold for longer.

#### **Food Premises can consider the following options:**

- Contact a nearby inspected food premises that has power to request storing your potentially hazardous foods there until power is restored.
- Rent a reefer truck.
- ***Reminder that food premises must store food in inspected premises!***

### After Power is Restored:

**Discard any potentially hazardous food that has been at room temperature for two or more hours.**

- Use a thermometer to verify that the internal temperature of potentially hazardous foods.
- Discard potentially hazardous foods above 4°C and have been at that temperature for longer than 2 hours.
- If unsure that the product has been above 4°C for longer than 2 hours, err on the side of caution and discard.

Keep in mind that food contaminated with bacteria does not necessarily smell bad or appear spoiled. **Follow the “when in doubt, throw it out” rule to ensure that the food is safe.**

If raw food has leaked during thawing, clean and disinfect the areas the food and/or its juices have touched. Do not reuse the cloths used for clean-up until they have been cleaned and disinfected.

For more information, please contact your Public Health Inspector at Southwestern Public Health.