

Food safety during a power outage

What you need to know



Power outages can be brief, but can last for days or even weeks sometimes. A prolonged power failure can affect refrigerators, freezers and water treatment devices, increasing the risk of foodborne illnesses and poor water quality. Electronic water treatment devices may not be working and could affect the water quality.

Use a probe thermometer (if available) to check the temperature of foods to ensure food has maintained and/or been cooked to a safe temperature to prevent bacteria from growing and potentially causing illness.



When the power goes out...

1. Eat the food in your refrigerator;
2. then use the food in your freezer;
3. finally, use your emergency food supply.

Food safety

During a prolonged power outage it will be a challenge to keep perishable foods safe. Bacteria and other harmful microorganisms grow rapidly at temperatures between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F). Remember to:

- Keep doors to refrigerators and freezers closed to keep cold air inside. A closed refrigerator will keep food cold for 4-6 hours. A closed chest freezer that is full will keep food frozen for up to 48 hours. A half-full freezer will keep food frozen for a day.
- Maintain all perishable foods such as meats, dairy, seafood and poultry at 4°C (40°F) or colder using ice if available. Do not use or eat any perishable food that has been above 4°C (40°F) for more than 2 hours.
- Discard all perishable foods such as seafood, meat, dairy and poultry products that have warmed to a temperature above 4°C (40°F). Discard all frozen foods that have thawed and warmed to a temperature above 4°C (40°F).
- Discard all food that appears slimy, mouldy or discoloured.

Probe thermometer

Cook food to an internal temperature hot enough to kill harmful bacteria or other microorganisms for at least 15 seconds. Use the chart below to determine the minimum cooking temperature for each type of food. To check temperature, insert the probe thermometer into the thickest part of the food.



Perishable foods	Minimum cooking temperatures
Whole poultry	Internal temperature of 82°C (180°F)
Chicken pieces, ground poultry and all parts of ground meat that contain poultry	Internal temperature of 74°C (165°F)
Food mixtures containing poultry, eggs, meat, fish or other hazardous foods	Internal temperature of 74°C (165°F) in all parts of the mixture
Pork and pork products	Internal temperature of 71°C (160°F)
Ground meat (e.G., Ground beef or pork)	Internal temperature of 71°C (160°F)
Fish	Internal temperature of 70°C (158°F)
Other hazardous foods such as roast beef, lamb or goat	Internal temperature of 60°C (140°F)



Clean water

Power outages can affect your water purification systems. Safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene includes bottled, boiled, or treated water.

It is recommended that you use at least one of the following sources of safe water listed in the emergency or short-term water sources chart.

Disinfecting surfaces

Ensure all contaminated surfaces have been properly cleaned and sanitized prior to use.

Clean all affected surfaces with detergent and water. After cleaning, rinse the surface with an alternative source of clean water and wipe down the surfaces with a sanitizing solution. An effective sanitizer can be prepared by adding one tablespoon of household bleach to 4.5 litres (1 gallon) of clean water. Prepare a fresh solution daily and label your sanitizing solution container.



Garbage disposal

Municipal garbage pick-up may be interrupted during a power outage. Storing garbage in closed, leak-proof containers can prevent rodents and insects.

Plan ahead

Taking the following steps will prepare you for a power interruption:

- Have a seven-day supply of non-perishable food such as canned goods, dried fruits, cereal, peanut butter, etc.
- Have a manual can/bottle opener
- Have a probe thermometer
- Store a seven day supply of water for each member of your family. You will need one gallon of water per person per day, on average
- Have available disposable eating utensils such as cups, cutlery and dishes

For more information about planning ahead for a power outage, please visit peelregion.ca/pep

Emergency or short-term water sources			
Method	Directions	Advantages	Comments
Boiling	Bring to a rolling boil for 1 minute and allow to cool.	Kills all known pathogens.	Boiled and cooled water should be safe to drink.
Chlorine Bleach	Add 2 drops (0.1mL) per litre of water (or 4 drops if water is cloudy). Mix, let stand at least 30 minutes.	Usually effective against most pathogens.	Use when boiling water is not practical. Chlorine will not kill parasitic organisms.
Bottled	Use water from a reputable supplier. Make sure seal is not broken on bottle before use.	Best alternative source of clean drinking water.	Use if water is cloudy or suspected to have high levels of chemical pollutants or when there is no other alternative clean water source available.

Always use clean (potable) water for drinking, brushing teeth, cooking, bathing and cleaning dishes.



ENV-0066 23/07

For more information visit peelregion.ca or call Peel Public Health 905-799-7700, Caledon residents call 905-584-2216.