

## **Illinois Department of Public Health**

### **Food Safety Guidance Following Power Failures**

#### **What To Do When Your Freezer Fails**

When the electricity is off, a fully stocked freezer will keep food frozen two days if the door remains closed. A half-full freezer can keep foods frozen about one day.

What can you do if electric service will not be reconnected within one or two days?

Keep the freezer door closed.

If your friends have electricity, divide your frozen foods among their freezers.

Seek freezer space in a store, church, school, or commercial meat locker or freezer that has electrical service.

Know where you can buy dry and block ice. Dry ice freezes everything it touches; 25 pounds of it will keep a 10-cubic-foot freezer below freezing for three to four days. When using dry ice, though, be sure to take several precautions. Never touch dry ice with bare hands! Also, do not stick your head into a freezer that contains dry ice. It gives off carbon dioxide, which replaces oxygen, so leave the door open a short time before examining your food.

If food is still "cold-to-the-touch," it may be cooked and eaten immediately, or refrozen.

#### **What To Do When Your Refrigerator Fails**

When power goes off in the refrigerator, you can normally expect food inside to stay safely cold for four to six hours, depending on how warm your kitchen is.

Add block ice to the refrigerator if the electricity is off longer than four to six hours.

High-protein foods (dairy products, meat, fish, poultry) should be consumed as soon as possible if power is not restored immediately. They cannot be stored safely at room temperature.

Fruits and vegetables can be kept safely at room temperature until there are obvious signs of spoilage (mold, slime, wilt). In fact, with good ventilation, vegetables will last longer at room temperature. Remove them from the refrigerator if electrical service may not resume soon.

**How should I dispose of foods that need to be discarded?**

Food may be disposed of by placing in garbage bags and placing in garbage receptacles for collection and disposal. Some products may require heavy-duty garbage bags or double bagging to prevent leaks.