



# Township of Woodbridge

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## Department of Health and Human Services

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Woodbridge - Ten Towns, One Community

## POWER OUTAGES/APPLIANCE FAILURE

Following these steps will help keep food safe during power outages or when the freezer or refrigerator is not working:

- If the appliance will be working again within a couple of hours, just minimize opening of the freezer and refrigerator doors.
- A fully stocked freezer will usually keep food frozen for 2 days after losing power. A half-full freezer will usually keep food frozen for about 1 day. If the freezer is not full, quickly group packages together so they will retain the cold more effectively.
- Separate raw meat and poultry items from other foods. If the raw meat and poultry begin to thaw; this will prevent their juices from getting onto other foods.
- If the power will be out for a longer period than the freezer will maintain the cold, dry ice may be placed in the freezer.

CAUTION: Never touch dry ice with bare hands or breathe its vapors in an enclosed area. Dry ice is frozen carbon dioxide, a gas that settles in low areas and lethal to breathe in high concentration.

- In the refrigerator, food will usually keep 4 to 6 hours, depending upon the temperature of the room. If the power will be out for a longer time, block ice may be placed in the refrigerator.

When the freezer is operating again, use the following guidelines to decide what to do with foods that were stored in the freezer:

- If ice crystals are still visible and/or the food feels as cold as if refrigerated, it is safe to refreeze. Raw meats and poultry, cheese, juices, breads and pastries can be refrozen without substantially compromising quality. Prepared foods, fish, vegetables and fruits can be refrozen safely, but quality may suffer.
- If the food thawed or was held above 40°F for more than 2 hours, it should generally be discarded because bacteria multiply to unsafe levels under these conditions. The only foods that should be refrozen are well wrapped hard cheeses, butter and margarine, breads and pastries without custard fillings, fruits and fruit juices that look and smell acceptable, and vegetables held above 40°F for less than 6 hours.

When the refrigerator is operating again, use the following guidelines to decide what to do with foods that were stored in the freezer:

- Fresh meats, poultry, lunch meats, hot dogs, eggs, milk, soft cheeses, and prepared or cooked foods should be discarded if they have been held above 40°F for more than 2 hours because bacteria can multiply to unsafe levels under these conditions.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables are safe as long as they are still firm and there is no evidence of mold, a yeasty smell or sliminess. Juices, opened containers of vinegar and oil salad dressings, ketchup, pickles, jams, and jellies and well-wrapped hard cheeses are safe as long as there is no evidence of mold growth, and they look and smell acceptable. Well-wrapped butter and margarine can usually be kept as long as they do not melt, but should be discarded if rancid odors develop. To remove spills and freshen the freezer and refrigerator, wash them with a solution of 2 tablespoons of baking soda dissolved in 1 quart of warm water. To absorb any lingering odors, place an open box or dish of baking soda in the appliance.