



National Network

Information, Guidance and Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act

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Emergency Food and Water

Are you prepared for food and water during an emergency? Keeping and maintaining food for an emergency is important. Wide spread power outages can last for more than a few hours, leaving you without the ability to cook or refrigerate food. Large storms can result in your having to shelter in place for 72 hours, or in some cases a week or longer, so the need to prepare is for this possibility is clear.

Emergency Food and Water Checklist

Use this checklist is to assist you in planning to keep and maintain food for an emergency. You can also use it to help identify areas on which to work.

If the action item(s) in this checklist is complete, check the "Done" box. If the action item(s) does not apply to you, check the "Does Not Apply" box. Use the "Notes" box to make your follow-up comments.

Date Complete	Does Not Apply	Item	Notes
		Consider including emergency food in your regular food supply, that:	
		Is ready-to-eat (does not need to be kept cold, prepared, or cooked)	
		Can be prepared with little or no water	
		Includes items for those with specific diet needs (puree; diets free of: sugar, salt, glutens, fat, etc.)	
		You like (i.e. if you hate peanut butter, don't store it)	



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		Is easy to open and store (for example pop-top cans, re-sealable bags)	
		Come in small packages. (Smaller containers are easier to handle than larger ones. Smaller containers are easier to pick up and drink from - especially if you lack the strength to pick up and hold heavy containers, for example a heavier gallon-size water bottle.)	
		Is stable and has a long shelf life* (will store for about a year without going bad)	
		Keep supplies for easy opening and storing of food:	
		Manual can opener (that you are able to use)	
		Plastic or foil wrap	
		Re-sealing plastic bags	
		Storage containers	
		Water	
		Store one gallon per person per day, for drinking and cooking	
		Store water in thoroughly washed plastic, glass, or enamel-lined metal containers	
		Recycle (use and replace): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-stored water every six months. • Commercially bottled water every 12 months. 	
		What to do with food in your refrigerator when the power goes out:	
		Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.	



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full and the door remains closed). 	
		Tell your kids not to open the refrigerator door.	
		<p>Consider keeping an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer. An appliance thermometer will indicate the temperature in the refrigerator and freezer in case of a power outage and help determine the safety of the food.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the power has been out for several days, then check the temperature of the freezer with an appliance -thermometer or food thermometer. If the food still contains ice crystals or is at or below 40 °F (Fahrenheit), it is safe. Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40 °F or below. 	
		If a thermometer is not kept in the freezer, then check each package of food to determine its safety. If the food still contains ice crystals, the food is safe.	
		If possible, get block ice or dry ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot full freezer for 2 days.	
		If it looks like the power outage will be for more than 2-4 hours, pack the important items in your refrigerator, such as milk, dairy products, meats, fish, poultry, eggs, and left-overs into your cooler surrounded by ice. Keep temperature at or below 40 °F.	
		If it looks like the power outage will go on for longer than a day or so, prepare another cooler with ice for the items in your freezer.	



Date Complete	Does Not Apply	Item	Notes
		<p>When in Doubt, Throw it out!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never taste a food to determine its safety! You will be at risk for food poisoning. • Throw away any items that have been exposed to temperatures greater than 40 degrees for more than two hours. <p>Get rid of refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers, and deli items to eliminate risk of food borne illness.</p>	
		Restocking your food	
		<p>Develop a restock system that helps you remember to eat and replace your emergency food before the use-by date. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a 4D (Delightful Delicious Disaster Dinner) now and then, for example when you do not feel like cooking. 	

***Examples of "long shelf life" foods:**

- cereals
- cocoa
- crackers
- peanut butter,
- jelly
- granola bars
- trail mix
- instant coffee
- tea bags
- comfort food such as:
 - cookies
 - hard candy and lollipops
 - sweetened cereals,
- sugar, salt, pepper
- bouillon cubes
- canned foods like:
 - nuts,
 - condensed milk.
 - vegetables, vegetable soups,
 - fruits, fruit juices,
 - meats.
 - soft drinks – noncarbonated



Sources for More Information

[Consumer's Guide to Food Safety: Severe Storms and Hurricanes](#)- recommendations about keeping food safe during times of power outages and flooding. Last accessed 08.14.13

[Food and Water in an Emergency](#), (2004) Recommendations from FEMA and the American Red Cross. Last accessed 08.14.13

[Food labeling](#) "Sell by Feb 14" is a type of information you might find on a meat or poultry product. Are dates required on food products? Does it mean the product will be unsafe to use after that date? Last accessed 08.14.13

[Food Safety](#) from American Red Cross. Last accessed 09.4.12

[Food and Water in an Emergency](#) (2006) FEMA. Last accessed 09.4.12

[Heater meals](#) - Self-heating meal with a 2 year shelf life

[Keeping Food Safe During an Emergency](#) - A flood, fire, national disaster, or the loss of power from high winds, snow, or ice could jeopardize the safety of your food. Knowing how to determine if food is safe and how to keep food safe will help minimize the potential loss of food and reduce the risk of food borne illness. Last accessed 08.14.13

Short videos and audio clips

- "[Food Safety During Power Outages](#)."; [Video in American Sign Language](#) is also available (WMV).
- [Food Safety Advice for Power Loss \(2:10\)](#) [Spanish\(3:02\)](#)
- [USDA Food Safety Advice after Power Loss \(1:26\)](#)
- [Visit FSIS on YouTube; Food Safety Audio Podcasts \(View all or subscribe\)](#)
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For more information, call and speak to an ADA specialist at **1-800-949-4232**. All calls are confidential.



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Content was developed by the Pacific ADA Center, and is based on professional consensus of ADA experts and the ADA National Network.



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