



# **Disaster** readiness - response - recovery

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*For immediate release*

## **Prepare foods safely after a power failure**

Preparing meals can be a challenge during a disaster-related power failure. Without traditional heating, refrigeration or water sources, cooks must consider the safest and most efficient means of preparing food.

If you have limited heat for cooking, choose foods that cook quickly. Prepare casseroles and one-dish meals or serve no-cook foods. Foods can be warmed using a fireplace or an outdoor charcoal grill.

A candle warmer such as a fondue pot can be used, but its heat is not adequate for safely cooking raw meats, fish, poultry and eggs. A camp stove or charcoal burner can be used, but never inside your home, even in a fireplace. Fumes from these stoves can be deadly.

Frozen foods should be avoided because they require much more cooking time and heat than canned goods. Eat commercially canned foods straight from the can. Prepare and eat foods in their original containers, if possible.

When safe drinking water is not available, substitute liquids from canned vegetables for water in unsweetened cooked dishes. Substitute juice from canned fruits for water in salads and beverages. All water from questionable sources must be boiled for at least 10 minutes before use in food preparation.

If you are without refrigeration, open only enough cans or jars of food for one meal. Leftover food in jars and cans cannot be saved. If necessary, substitute canned and powdered milk for fresh milk.

With the door closed, food in most freezers will stay below 40 degrees F for two to four days, even in summer. Thawing rate depends on the amount, temperature and kinds of food in the freezer, as well as size of freezer. You may safely re-freeze foods that still contain ice crystals or that have been kept at 40 degrees F or below.

More information on disaster recovery can be obtained from your county Cooperative Extension center or the Web site at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/disaster>.

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