

**WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for June 15, 2020**  
**Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.**

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about food safety during a power outage.

That was quite a storm that blew through on Wednesday evening! Tree branches were down all over town and on county roads, and several trees split or were completely uprooted. Thanks to all the emergency responders who shine in these hours and to the many good neighbors who are willing to lend a hand in clean-up efforts.

We lost power at our house for a few hours. It sure makes you appreciate all that electricity allows us to do. One question that always comes up relates to food safety. How long is the food in my refrigerator and freezer safe to eat?

The perishable foods we keep in our refrigerator should be kept at less than 40 degrees Fahrenheit. It is a great idea to invest in an air thermometer to keep in your fridge. These are relatively inexpensive, usually in the \$3-10 range. Even fancy refrigerator sensors don't always get it right, so a thermometer hanging near the back of your top shelf should give a dependable reading.

Keeping foods below 40 degrees helps to greatly reduce the risk for the growth of pathogenic bacteria, or the bacteria that can cause foodborne illness. There are plenty of other good bacteria (like in yogurt) and annoying bacteria (like the ones that spoil milk) that can survive and grow in cool conditions. But the bad guys find it too chilly to multiply.

When certain foods get into the "Temperature Danger Zone" of 40 to 135 degrees Fahrenheit, pathogenic bacteria are in their sweet spot. These foods contain enough moisture and have fairly neutral pH levels that allow the pathogenic bacteria to thrive. Any of these types of food that are in the Temperature Danger Zone for more than 4 hours should be thrown out. During picnics when temperatures are above 90 degrees then the recommendation is only 2 hours, as bacteria will multiply much faster at warmer temperatures.

If you open your refrigerator after the power comes back on and your handy air thermometer reads 40 degrees or lower, then all is well. But if the temperature is higher, or you do not have a

reading, then according to the USDA, the following foods should be thrown out from a refrigerator that has been without power for more than 4 hours:

- Meat, poultry, and seafood products
- Milk, cream, yogurt, and similar dairy products
- Eggs and egg products
- Dough and cooked pasta
- Cooked or cut produce

The following types of foods can be used once they have been cooled to 40 degrees or lower for at least 2 hours:

- Hard cheeses (like Swiss, Cheddar, and Provolone)
- Butter and margarine
- Opened fruit juices
- Jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, ketchup, olives, and pickles
- Barbecue, soy, and Worcestershire (wu-ste-shure) sauces
- Fresh mushrooms, herbs, and spices
- Uncut, raw vegetables and fruits

There is better news with the freezer. If you are utilizing your space well and keeping your freezer rather full, then the power can be out for 48 hours before food should begin to thaw. You have only 24 hours if your freezer is half full.

Here are a couple of tips for your freezer: If you are not utilizing your space well, then fill up empty milk jugs with water, leaving about 3 inches of headspace at the top to allow for ice expansion. Put these in the bottom of your freezer to keep the air colder inside for longer.

Another idea is to keep several ice cubes in a ziptop bag or small container in the freezer. If the ice cubes ever melt and refreeze, then they will lose their shape. And this means that the temperature was above 32 degrees in the freezer. This is especially helpful if power is restored during night hours while you are sleeping or if there would be a power outage while you are away from home and don't know the number of hours it was out. You can learn more about food safety during a power outage by visiting our Facebook page "OSU Extension Coshocton County."

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at [coshocton.osu.edu](http://coshocton.osu.edu). Make it a healthy day!