



Guidance Document: Food Safety & Disposal

Information for guiding residents in the disposing of food following power outages.

Food Safety During & After Power Outages

Information provided by the Government of Canada



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Food safety in an emergency

Handling refrigerated and frozen food during a power failure

- Freezing stops the growth of bacteria. Do not open the refrigerator or freezer door unless absolutely necessary in order to maintain the cold temperature.
 - A full freezer will keep food frozen for about 48 hours. A freezer that is half full will keep food frozen for about 24 hours.
 - An unopened refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours.
 - If available, add ice to the refrigerator to keep the food at a safe temperature if the power will be out for long periods of time.
- Do not place frozen food outside, even in winter. The sun's rays could thaw frozen food even when the outdoor temperature is very cold, and animals could contaminate your food.
- If you know that a power failure will last for a long period of time, see if you can take the food to a friend nearby who has power.

Handling refrigerated and frozen food after a power failure

- Discard any thawed food that has been at room temperature for two or more hours, and any food that has an obvious unusual colour or odour. Keep in mind that food contaminated with bacteria does not necessarily smell bad or appear spoiled.
- Food that still contains ice crystals or feels refrigerator-cold can be re-frozen.
- If raw food has leaked during thawing, clean and disinfect the areas the food has touched. Do not reuse the cloths you have used for clean-up until they have been disinfected by washing in hot water.

Source: <https://inspection.canada.ca/food-safety-for-consumers/fact-sheets/food-handling/emergency/eng/1331578972167/1331579901110>

Insurance Information

Information provided by the Insurance Bureau of Canada



Insurance Basics ▾ Stay Protected ▾ Issues and Advocacy ▾

Food spoilage

Your freezer and its contents may be covered for spoilage caused by an accidental power interruption. Typically, in this situation, your freezer and its contents are insured for a specific amount. Check your policy.

If possible, before disposing of food from your freezer, make a list and take photos of the contents for insurance purposes.

If you suspect your freezer is contaminated by food spoilage or other damage, speak to your insurer before discarding the appliance.

Source: <https://www.ibc.ca/stay-protected/severe-weather-centre/2023-wildfire-season>

Disposing of Spoiled Food at RDCK Transfer Stations

During an emergency, such as a prolonged power outage, RDCK Staff will assess potential opportunities for streamlining spoiled food disposal options for residents on a case-by-case basis. Streamlining may come in the way of allowing spoiled food disposals at transfer station, waiving handling fees (normally applied with Landfill disposals of spoiled food), and increasing hours of operations and/or emptying of bins.

Under normal conditions, spoiled food, is only accepted at Landfills for disposal as “Mixed Waste” (garbage), and must be double bagged, and delivered at a time pre-arranged with the RDCK.

In some situations, arrangements may also be made available for disposing spoiled food at one of the RDCK’s Organic Processing Facilities as “Organic Waste” at a less expensive rate than “Mixed Waste”.

To learn more

Go to: rdck.ca/AfterAnEmergency