

Food Safety After a Fire

If food has been kept at the wrong temperature for a long time, like during a power outage, it can make you sick. Any food that has been out of the right temperature in refrigerators or freezers should be thrown away.

To properly dispose of food that was previously refrigerated or frozen:


- **Carefully** place all food in heavy-duty trash bags.
- **Be Careful** not to let packages open or explode.
- **Do not** open packages. There is a risk of illness if the potentially hazardous foods are opened and come in contact with you.



What should I discard?

- Food that was not in the refrigerator but may have come into contact with water should also be discarded. This would include all fruits, vegetables, unpackaged products, screw-top jars, cardboard packaging, and plastic packaging.
- Food that has been exposed to high heat from the fire should also be discarded. This would include food in cans, glass jars, and food in packages. Microorganisms in the cans and jars may have been activated, which could cause illness later on. If a can starts to swell, immediately throw it out.
- Food that has been exposed to smoke damage should also be discarded. This would include any unpackaged foods and foods in permeable packaging, such as cardboard and some plastics.

When in doubt, throw it out.



Use the following steps to protect yourself and your family from foods that could potentially make you sick. Always wear protective equipment when throwing out spoiled food.

Handle food safely and use protective gear/equipment:

- **Use disposable gloves.** If heavier gloves are needed, use disposable gloves under the heavy gloves to prevent contact with spoiled food.
- **Use facemasks** to help with the offensive odors and to provide face protection.
- **Use goggles,** if available, to prevent secretions from entering your eyes.
- **Wash your hands** immediately after removing your gloves. Wash your hands before you touch anyone else or yourself. Also, wash your hands before eating and drinking.
- **Use a safe source of water.** If you are under a boil water order notice, you can boil the water and cool it before washing your hands. Additionally, boil water before using it to prepare food. Acceptable water is water that is boiled vigorously (a “rolling boil”) for at least one minute. Increase boiling time to at least three minutes if you live at high elevations above 6,500 feet.



To sanitize the refrigerators and freezers:

- **Use household bleach.** Do not use scented bleach, whiteners, or other bleaches with special properties used for washing clothes. Mix a solution of at least 100 parts per million (ppm). To make a bleach solution, use 2 capfuls per gallon of water. Instructions are also available on the containers, or use an ammonia solution of at least 200 ppm.
- **Do not mix bleach and ammonia; use only one solution!**
- **Do not use anything stronger than bleach or ammonia.** Do not use a caustic agent such as lye.

