



## WELLNESS NOW

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### FOOD SAFETY TIPS DURING POWER OUTAGES

The OKC-County Health Department (OCCHD) is reminding residents with power outages continuing in parts of the metro that unrefrigerated fresh and frozen food can spoil quickly. “People need to be aware of how long food will keep when the electricity is out,” says OKC-County Public Health Protection Administrator Troy Skow. “You cannot rely on appearance or odor to tell whether the food is still safe to eat which could be a recipe for a case of foodborne illness such as salmonella poisoning.”

Foodborne bacteria can begin to multiply in perishable food such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk and mayonnaise after it’s been kept above 40 degrees for more than two hours. Generally, if the power is off for four hours or less, food in an unopened refrigerator will stay below 40 degrees Fahrenheit and should be fine to use. A full freezer will keep food at an acceptable temperature for about 48 hours if the freezer door remains closed.

One option is to transfer food into ice chests. Pack milk, meat, fish, eggs or other spoilable foods into a cooler surrounded by ice. (Dry ice may keep foods cool for even longer, but always use caution and wear gloves when handling dry ice.)

Frozen food is usually safe to cook or refreeze if the power hasn’t been off any longer than 24 hours. If you have an appliance thermometer in your freezer, check the temperature when the power comes back on – if it reads 40 degrees or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen. If you don’t have an appliance thermometer, check each item individually. If the food still contains ice crystals, it’s safe to refreeze or cook.

You can always plan to eat your refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish or eggs while they are still at safe temperatures. It’s important that each item is thoroughly cooked to the proper temperature to ensure that any foodborne bacteria are destroyed.

For more information, visit [www.occhd.org](http://www.occhd.org) or <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/emergency/index.html>

**We are assisting right now with Strike Teams to give free Tetanus shots where storm damage cleanup is underway.**

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[www.occhd.org](http://www.occhd.org)

