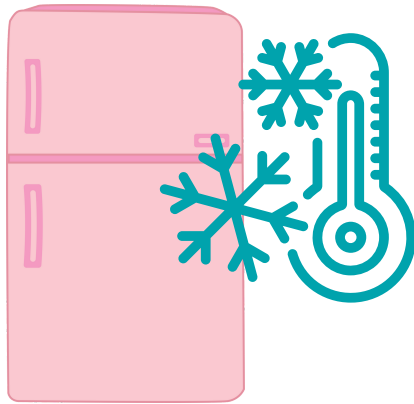


Keep or Toss:

Food Safety After a Power Outage

Objective:

Learn how to decide which foods are safe to eat and which to throw out after a power outage to prevent foodborne illness.



Materials Needed:

- Printed food sheets (see below) or empty food packages
- Refrigerator thermometer for discussion/demo

Why it Matters:

After a power outage, food may sit at unsafe temperatures without you realizing it. Bacteria that cause foodborne illness—like *Salmonella*, *Listeria*, and *E. coli*—can grow rapidly when food is held above 40°F for more than 2 hours. These bacteria don't change the taste, smell, or appearance of food, so the risk isn't always obvious.

Knowing what to keep and what to toss protects your health and your family's. It also helps reduce confusion and stress after an emergency.
When in doubt—throw it out!

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Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Set the Stage:

- Designate an area of the room to foods that you KEEP and one that is for foods to TOSS.
- Distribute the FOOD cards to participants.

2. Decide whether to Keep or Toss:

- Participants will look at their FOOD card(s) and decide whether or not they should keep the food after a power outage (case-scenario: more than 2 hours and the temperature inside the fridge is 78°F) or if they should throw it away.
- Participants should place each FOOD card in either the Keep area or the Toss area.

3. Debrief:

- Let the group look at the cards in each group and discuss as a class whether they are categorized correctly and why.

Review Key Concepts:

- Foods kept above 40°F for more than 2 hours or above 90°F for more than 1 hour should be tossed—especially meats, dairy, leftovers, and cut produce.
- Some items (like hard cheeses, whole fruits, butter, bread) are safe even after temperature abuse.
- Never taste food to check safety—when in doubt, throw it out!



Pro Tip:

- Keep your refrigerator thermometer in the warmest part of the fridge – near or in the door.

Keep or Toss:

Food Safety After a Power Outage Activity Answer Key



KEEP:

- Block cheddar cheese
- Parmesan
- Butter
- Uncut fruits and vegetables, fresh mushrooms and herbs
- Fruit juice
- Jelly
- Ketchup, mustard, relish, olives, and pickles
- Breads, cakes (without cream filling) tortillas, waffles, fruit pies

**When in doubt—
throw it out!**



TOSS:

- Meat, poultry, and seafood
- Soft, low-fat, and shredded cheeses
- Milk products and milk alternatives
- Eggs and egg products
- Open creamy condiments
- Open tomato sauce
- Cooked and raw cut fruits and vegetables
- Packaged leafy greens
- Leftovers
- Fish sauce and oyster sauce
- Stored human milk and open infant formula should be discarded within 2 hours of reaching 40°F