



CITY OF SACRAMENTO  
COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO  
Joint Media Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Food and Fire Safety Reminder**

**Be aware of food spoilage and fire issues resulting from lengthy power outages**

Sacramento City and county residents who have been without power continuously since Friday should be aware that the window of safety has passed for maintaining the safety of frozen food.

A full freezer that has not been opened will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (or 24 hours if the freezer is half full and the door has remained closed). More than 48 hours have elapsed since some of Sacramento's most-affected neighborhoods lost power.

A refrigerator will only store food safely at 40 degrees or less for about four hours if unopened. If power has been out at a house for more than four hours and ice hasn't been added to the refrigerator compartment or the food hasn't been transferred to ice-filled chests, the food should be considered unsafe to eat and needs to be discarded.

No matter what the cost of food, it should be thrown out if it has not been stored at proper temperature. Food-borne illness can cause vomiting, diarrhea, doctor's visits and lost workdays. When bacteria grow on food, it can produce toxins or multiply to levels that cannot be made safe by cooking.

The following additional food safety information is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

- Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40° F or below.
- Never taste a food to determine its safety!
- Obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot full freezer for two days.
- If the power has been out for several days, check the temperature of the freezer with an appliance thermometer or food thermometer. If the food still contains ice crystals or is at 40° F or below, the food is safe.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine its safety. If the food still contains ice crystals, the food is safe.
- Discard refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers and deli items after four hours without power.
- When in Doubt, Throw it Out!

Another important area to consider in the storm aftermath is fire safety.

Darkened homes waiting for power restoration should be lit with battery-powered lights rather than candles. Fireplaces, wood stoves and other combustion heaters should be used only if they are properly vented to the outside. Paper should not be burned in a fireplace. Heat can be conserved by closing off unused rooms in a home.

The following additional fire safety information is provided by the National Center for Environmental Health:

- Use fireplace, wood stoves, or other combustion heaters only if they are located away from combustible material such as curtains, properly vented to the outside and do not leak flue emissions into the indoor air space.
- Do not burn paper in a fireplace.
- Ensure adequate ventilation if you must use a kerosene heater.
- Use only the type of fuel your heater is designed to use—don't substitute.
- Protect yourself from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning by installing a battery-operated CO detector and never using generators, grills, camp stoves, or similar devices indoors.
- Never use a charcoal or gas grill indoors—the fumes are deadly.
- Never use an electric generator indoors, inside the garage, or near the air intake of your house because of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Plug in appliances to the generator using individual heavy-duty, outdoor-rated cords.
- Do not use the generator or appliances if they are wet because of the risk of electrocution.
- Do not store gasoline indoors where the fumes could ignite.

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