



News Release

Memphis and Shelby County Health Department
814 Jefferson Ave., Memphis, TN 38105

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Post-Storm Food Handling Precautions

MEMPHIS, TN – Due to power outages following the recent severe weather, the Memphis and Shelby County Health Department strongly encourages all citizens to examine the food items in their refrigerators and freezers. When power is restored it is important to identify and discard potentially hazardous food that may have been at temperatures above 41°F for four (4) hours or longer or has an unusual color, odor, or texture.

According to recommendations from the Tennessee Department of Health and the federal Food and Drug Administration, residents that have been without power **should discard** the following foods if they have been without refrigeration for four (4) hours or longer:

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs and egg substitutes – raw or cooked	Custard, chiffon, pumpkin or cheese pies
Lunch meats and hot dogs	Cream-filled pastries
Milk, cream and soft cheese	Cookie dough made with eggs
Casseroles, stews or soups	Whipped butter
Creamy-based food made on site	Cut melons
	Cooked vegetables

The following foods may be kept at room temperature for a few days, although food quality may be affected.

Butter or margarine	Fruit juices
Hard and processed cheeses	Fresh herbs and spices
Dried fruits and coconut	Fruit pies, breads, rolls and muffins
Opened jars of vinegar-based salad dressings, jelly, relish, taco sauce, barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup, olives	Cakes, except cream cheese frosted or cream-filled
	Flour and nuts

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Food stored in freezers is safe to keep or use as long as the food is still frozen or contains ice crystals. Leave the freezer door closed as much as possible. Once the freezer reaches room temperature, the food either must be cooked and used right away or discarded.

Precautions must be taken for storage and collection of spoiled food to prevent attracting rats and other vermin and to diminish strong odors.

- All spoiled food should be placed in a plastic bag and securely tied.
- Spoiled food in plastic bags should be stored in a metal or plastic leak-proof garbage container and placed by the curb for collection.
- If at all possible, keep garbage containers out of direct sunlight prior to trash collection day.
- Do **NOT** store food in boxes or plastic bags on curb for pickup, unless they are in waste containers with tight fitting lids.

It is important to remember to wash your hands with soap and water after handling of raw or spoiled food items in order to reduce the spread of diseases.

For more information regarding proper disposal of food items, contact the Memphis and Shelby County Health Department's Environmental Sanitation Food Service Program during normal business hours at 544-7757 or 544-7671.