

Williamson County Office:  
Williamson County Airport  
120 Express Drive  
Marion, IL 62959-9808  
Phone 618/993-8111  
FAX 618/993-6455

FRANKLIN-WILLIAMSON  
**BI-COUNTY**  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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

Franklin County Office:  
Franklin Heights Plaza  
403 East Park  
Benton, IL 62812-1920  
Phone 618/439-0951  
FAX 618/438-3005

For Release On:  
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Williamson County Press Conference

**Contacts:** Ronda Koch  
Franklin-Williamson Bi-County HD  
(618) 694-8595  
Or  
Robin Koehl  
Franklin-Williamson Bi-County HD  
(618) 889-3709

### Keeping Food Safe during a Power Outage

**FRANKLIN & WILLIAMSON COUNTIES, IL** – Due to the severe storms in Southern Illinois, many residents without power need to take precautions when choosing food to eat. In times like this, it is safest to eat foods that don't require refrigeration and can be eaten cold or heated on an outdoor grill (e.g. shelf stable food, boxed or canned milk, water, and canned goods). However, the following information can help you weigh the safety of eating frozen or refrigerated food.

#### Frozen Food

- ◆ If the door remains closed, a fully stocked freezer will keep food frozen for two days, and a half-full freezer will keep food frozen for one day.
- ◆ When the power is out longer than this amount of time:
  - Safely utilize a generator to keep the freezer and/or refrigerator running.
  - Try moving food to a friend or family's freezer who has power.
  - Purchase dry ice. Twenty-five pounds of dry ice will keep a 10-cubic foot freezer below freezing for three to four days. **REMEMBER not to handle dry ice with your bare hands and DO NOT stick your head in the freezer, since dry ice gives off carbon dioxide.**
- ◆ When frozen food still has ice crystals, is 40°F or below, or is still "cold-to-the-touch," it can be refrozen or cooked and eaten immediately.

#### Refrigerated Food

- ◆ If the door remains closed, food will normally last at least four to six hours in a refrigerator, depending on the temperature of the kitchen.
- ◆ Block ice can be added to a refrigerator if the power will be out longer than that amount of time. Be sure to keep food packages out of the water as the ice melts.
- ◆ Coolers and ice can also keep items at or below 40°F.
- ◆ Dairy products, meat, fish, and poultry can be cooked and eaten if it is within two hours of the power outage. These items can be refrozen once cooked.
- ◆ Fruits and vegetables can be kept at room temperature safely until there are obvious signs of spoilage.

Discard any food that is discolored, slimy to the touch, or has an offensive odor. “When in doubt, throw it out.”

Some homeowner’s insurance companies reimburse customers for food lost during a power outage, subject to your deductible. Before you throw your food out, check with your insurance company, and if covered, inventory your food that will be discarded.

If you have further questions over this weekend and can get access to a landline phone or the Internet, you can call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or go to [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov) During weekends, the USDA hotline gives answers to frequently asked questions about food safety. The Franklin-Williamson Bi-County Health Department will continue to work with our local Emergency Management Agencies to determine what additional information would be helpful for our residents.