



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 17, 2017

Contact: Liz Pozzebon, DrPH, REHS
Environmental Health Division Director
805-781-5544

Power Outages May Increase Risk of Foodborne Illness

The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department cautions residents that extended power outages can endanger the safety of food. The Department offers the following guidance to reduce the risk of foodborne illness during a power outage:

While the power is out, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to keep food cold longer. If the power is out for less than two hours, food in your refrigerator and freezer will be safe to eat. If the power is out for longer than two hours, follow the guidelines below.

For the freezer section:

- A freezer that is half full will hold food safely for up to 24 hours. A full freezer will hold food safely for 48 hours.
- If the freezer is not full, group packages together so they will retain the cold more effectively.

For the refrigerated section:

- If you have advance warning of a power outage and if the outage is anticipated to last more than 4 hours, move foods that must be refrigerated to the freezer as space will allow. If necessary, use block ice or bagged ice for supplemental cooling.
- Pack milk, other dairy products, meat, fish, eggs, gravy and spoilable leftovers into a cooler surrounded by ice. Inexpensive Styrofoam coolers are fine for this purpose.
- Discard any thawed food that has risen to room temperature and remained there for 2 hours or more.
- It's best to use a probe food thermometer to check the internal temperature of your food right before you cook or eat it. Throw away any food that has a temperature of higher than 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

When in doubt, throw it out!

###