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Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

## news release

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### Food safety during a power outage

It is anticipated that much of Humboldt County will be without power for an extended period of time. The Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services Division of Environmental Health (DEH) wants to remind everyone of the following food safety guidelines to follow during temporary power outages.

Foods of concern during outages are classified as potentially hazardous foods (PHF) like cheese, milk, yogurt and raw and cooked meats. PHFs are foods that are perishable and can support the growth of bacteria when the food is held in the temperature danger zone of 41°F to 135°F.

Food facility operators should read the following food safety tips and refer to the document at the following link for more specific guidance:

<https://tinyurl.com/y27obld7>.

Be prepared for a power outage:

- Keep a thermometer in the refrigerator to ensure the temperature is 41°F or below.
- Make sure your freezer keeps food solidly frozen.
- Freeze containers of water for use in the refrigerator or freezer to help keep food cold during an outage.
- Store uncooked meat, poultry and seafood below or separate from other foods to prevent them from contaminating other foods as they thaw.
- Keep a supply of canned and pre-packaged food and bottled water available for prolonged outages.
- Have an adequate supply of water for consumption, dishwashing and hand washing, approximately one gallon per person per day.

When the power goes out:

- Keep refrigerator and freezer closed to maintain temperature inside. Food may stay cold in a refrigerator up to six hours and frozen 1-2 days in a freezer.
- Store bags or containers of ice in both the refrigerator and freezer to keep foods cold.

- Do not eat refrigerated foods that have been at temperatures over 41°F for more than four hours.
- If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish, or eggs, ensure they are fully cooked.

Tips for cooking during a power outage:

- Never use a charcoal grill, gas grill or camp stove indoors.
- Small electrical appliances can be used to prepare meals if you have access to an electrical generator. Never use a generator indoors.
- Make sure your chimney is sound before cooking in a fireplace. Don't start a fire in a fireplace that has a broken chimney. Be sure the damper is open.
- Never use gasoline to get a wood or charcoal fire started.
- Be sure the fire is completely extinguished when you are done with it.
- Ensure that foods are cooked to the following temperatures:
  - Fish/Eggs/Pork/Beef: 145°F
  - Ground beef: 155°F
  - Poultry: 165°F
- When cooking is not possible, many canned foods can be eaten cold.

When the power is restored:

- Check the temperature of the refrigerator to ensure food is 41°F or below. Food may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 41°F.
- No matter what the cost of the food, it should be thrown out if it has not been stored at proper temperature.
- Foodborne illness can cause vomiting, diarrhea and lost work days. When bacteria grow on food, it can produce toxins or multiply to levels that cannot be made safe by cooking.

Remember, you cannot rely on the appearance or odor to determine if food will make you sick. When in doubt, throw it out.

For more information on food safety, please contact DEH at 707-445-6215.

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