



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH County of Riverside

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN NO. 35-06-DES

DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION

FOOD HANDLING AT HOME DURING POWER OUTAGES

During energy shortages the California Independent System can order rolling blackouts. The utility companies divide their customers into “blocks” that are randomly blacked out one by one.— This bulletin is provided to assist you in maintaining safe food handling practices in your home in case of a power outage. Your family’s health need not be compromised by suspect foods if you follow appropriate safety measures.

➤ **If electricity is off for one hour or less:**

- 1) Food held in refrigerators or freezers may still be safe when the power outage is of a short duration.
 - Keep refrigerator/freezer doors closed while the power is off.
 - Group frozen foods close together in freezer.

➤ **If electricity is off for longer than one hour:**

- 2) Food will need to be evaluated and discarded if there is any doubt as to the safety of food.
 - Keep refrigerator/freezer doors closed as long as possible
 - Add clean ice or dry ice inside refrigerators/freezers to extend cold storage times. (Never handle dry ice with bare hands, or inhale fumes directly)
 - Have an accurate probe thermometer in your kitchen to measure food temperatures.
 - Discard any foods that have been in the “Danger Zone”, above 41°F for more than 2 hours.

➤ **You cannot tell if a food will make you sick by odor or appearance!**

- 3) Bacteria can multiply at an extremely fast pace. Many bacteria leave toxins that will not be destroyed by reheating or re-cooling. If you have perishables that have been in the “Danger Zone” for over 2 hours, it’s best to throw out that food.

Do not take any chances with your health or your family’s health.