



**This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/power-outage-protecting-food>

Released: April 9, 2024

Power out? Prepping, storing food can be ‘tricky’

K-State food scientist shares tips for protecting your family

K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee says preparing and storing food during a power outage can be “tricky.”

“Without a steady power source (such as a generator), food can be temperature-abused, which increases the risk for foodborne illness,” said Blakeslee, who also is coordinator of [K-State’s Rapid Response Center for Food Science](#).

Foodborne bacteria grows most rapidly between 40 degrees and 140 degrees Fahrenheit, Blakeslee said – doubling in number in as little as 20 minutes. “This temperature range is often called the ‘Temperature Danger Zone,’” she said.

When power fails, “refrigerated and frozen food warms or thaws and can allow potential bacteria to grow and multiply,” Blakeslee said.

“Without power, the options are limited to cook food indoors,” she said. “A fireplace can be used with wood or gas to grill food, or you can wrap food in foil in the fireplace.”

However, if using a fireplace, she cautions: “Do not use charcoal in the fireplace because it can emit carbon monoxide. Be sure the fireplace flue is open during use. Otherwise, use foods you don’t have to cook or keep cold. Only prepare enough food for one meal so that you don’t have leftovers.”

Meat products must be cooked to the proper internal temperature to assure safety. The food safety recommendations include:

- 145 F for steaks, chops and roasts.
- 160 F for ground meat.
- 165 F for all poultry.

Blakeslee urges consumers to consider stocking up on non-perishable foods and disposable utensils for an emergency. Some examples of foods to include are peanut butter, canned meats, whole grain chips or crackers, canned fruit, canned fruit and dried fruit. “And don’t forget pet food for your family’s pets,” she said.

“For canned foods, the pop top cans are easy to open,” Blakeslee said. “Otherwise, be sure to have a (non-electric) can opener available. These foods can be portable in case you need to relocate during an emergency. Single serve items – such as fruit cups and pudding – are easy foods to store for an emergency.”

Once canned goods are opened, they must be used, especially canned meats, fruits and vegetables. “Without refrigeration, the leftovers can not be stored for later use,” Blakeslee said.

She also reminded consumers of one of the most basic food safety steps: Wash your hands. “If running water is not available, disposable wipes or hand sanitizers can be used. Pack some extra bottles of water and soap in your emergency kit.”

Blakeslee publishes a monthly newsletter called [You Asked It!](#) that provides numerous tips on being safe and healthy. More information is also available from [local extension offices in Kansas.](#)

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

You Asked It! Newsletter, <https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter/>

K-State Research and Extension local offices, <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html>

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