

DHHS Provides Recommendations on Food Safety During Power Outages

Division of Public Health Services,
Food Protection

Published Date: 12/12/2008

Concord, NH – The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is releasing food safety recommendations for residents who have lost power in their homes as a result of the ice storm.

“Unexpected power outages can be very frustrating,” stated DHHS Commissioner Nicholas Toumpas. “One big issue of concern is whether the food in your home is still safe to eat. For the health and safety of your loved ones, and to avoid the potential of food borne illnesses, we are advising people to take extra precautions when determining if your food should be saved or thrown away.”

“In this type of situation you just can’t be too careful,” said Director of Public Health Dr Jose Montero. “Even if food doesn’t smell bad, and looks safe, it may have been out of a safe temperature range long enough to be contaminated with dangerous bacteria. A good rule to follow in this situation: when in doubt, throw it out.”

The US Department of Agriculture recommends taking the following steps during and after a weather emergency:

- Never taste food to determine its safety
 - Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature
 - The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature approximately 48 hours (24 hours if its half full and the door remains closed)
 - Food can be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40 degrees F or below
 - Get block ice or dry ice to keep your refrigerator and freezer as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for an extended period of time
- Discard refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, soft cheeses, milk, eggs, leftovers and deli items after 4 hours without power

Retail establishments with questions about safe food handling during a power outage, please visit the DHHS website at:

<http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/FOODPROTECTION/default.htm>