Food Handling in Power Outages

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) have these tips for handling a food during and after a power outage:

During:

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. The refrigerator will keep food safe for up to 4 hours.
    - ⇒ 4 hours in a refrigerator
    - ⇒ 48 hours in a full freezer/24 hours in a half-full freezer
- If the power is off longer, transfer food to a cooler and fill with ice or frozen gel packs. Make sure there is enough ice to keep food in the cooler at 40 °F or below. Add more ice to the cooler as it begins to melt.
- Obtain dry ice or block ice if your power is going to be out for a prolonged period. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot freezer for 2 days. (Caution: Do not touch dry ice with bare hands or place it in direct contact with food.)
- In freezers, food in the front, in the door, or in small, thin packages will defrost faster than large, thick items or food in the back or bottom of the unit.
- Use the homemade ice in your refrigerator, freezer, or coolers.

After:

- Never taste food to determine its safety. When in Doubt, Throw It Out!
- Throw out perishable food in your refrigerator (meat, fish, cut fruits and vegetables, eggs, milk, and leftovers) after 4 hours without power or a cold source like dry ice. Throw out any food with an unusual odor, color, or texture.
- Check temperatures of food kept in coolers or your refrigerator with an added cold source. Throw out food above 40°.
- If you have an appliance thermometer in your freezer, check to see if it is still at 40 °F or below.
- You can safely refreeze or cook thawed frozen food that still contains ice crystals or is at 40 °F or below.

Links:

- CDC Food Safety for Power Outages (https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/food-safety-during-a-power-outage.html#:~:text=Throw%20out%20perishable%20food%20in,odor%2C%20color%2C%20or%20texture)
- AIEC Power Outages & Food Safety (https://aiec.coop/power-outages-food-safety/