

## Food Supplies in a Disaster

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### Introduction

If a disaster strikes your community, you might not have access to food, and electricity for days, or even weeks. By taking some time now to store emergency food supplies, you can provide for your entire family\*.

### Public health significance

Access to adequate and suitable food supplies is a priority in a disaster. During and immediately after a disaster, it will be vital that you maintain your strength. Additionally, suitable storage, handling and cooking of food is necessary to prevent the potential for food poisoning.

### Action to take

#### Storage of Food

- Keep food in a dry, cool place if possible.
- Keep food covered at all times.
- Open food boxes or cans carefully so that you can close them tightly after each use.
- Wrap biscuits and crackers in plastic bags, and keep them in tight containers.
- Empty opened packages of sugar, dried fruits and nuts into screw-top jars or air-tight cans to protect them from pests.
- Inspect all food for signs of spoilage before use.
- Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies, dated with ink or marker. Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in front.

#### When Food Supplies Are Low

Food, unlike water, may be rationed safely (except for children and pregnant women). Healthy people can survive on half their usual food intake for an extended period, and without any food for many days.

You can use the canned foods, dry mixes and other staples on your cupboard shelves. Stock familiar foods in your emergency food supply. Familiar foods can lift morale and give a feeling of security in time of stress.

If your water supply is limited, try to avoid foods that are high in fat and protein, and don't stock salty foods, since they will make you thirsty.

#### If the electricity goes off:

FIRST - use perishable food and foods from the refrigerator;

THEN - use the foods from the freezer. To minimise the number of times you open the freezer door, post a list of freezer contents on the front. In a well-filled, well-insulated freezer, foods will usually still have ice crystals in their centres (meaning foods are safe to eat) for at least three days.

FINALLY - begin to use non-perishable foods and staples.

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### How to cook if the power goes out:

For emergency cooking you can use a fireplace, a bar-be-que, a charcoal grill or camp stove (only use outdoors). You can also heat food with candle warmers and fondue pots. Canned food can be eaten right out of the can without heating. If you heat food in the can, be sure to open the can and remove the label first.

*\*Refer to the "Emergency Pantry List" information at website [www.pantrylist.com.au/](http://www.pantrylist.com.au/)*

### Acknowledgement:

Information for this document was sourced from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (USA) in cooperation with the American Red Cross and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

### Related links:

- Food Standards Australia New Zealand at website: [www.foodstandards.gov.au/](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at website: [www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/)
- Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) at website: [www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq/css/beprepared.asp](http://www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq/css/beprepared.asp)
- Emergency Management Australia Community Awareness Publications at website: [www.ema.gov.au/www/emaweb/emaweb.nsf/Page/Publications](http://www.ema.gov.au/www/emaweb/emaweb.nsf/Page/Publications)