

Food Safety After An Earthquake

To keep food safe and avoid food poisoning, know what foods to store before an earthquake and how to handle foods afterwards.

Experts advise those living in earthquake areas to keep a **three-day supply** of emergency food and water.

ASSEMBLING AN EMERGENCY FOOD SUPPLY

Because gas and electric power systems may be damaged during an earthquake, it's important to have food on hand that doesn't need refrigeration.

- Canned goods are best, like ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables.
 - Foods in glass bottles and jars may break during a disaster.
 - Canned foods can be kept almost indefinitely as long as they aren't leaking or bulging.
 - For optimum quality, however, replace canned goods every year to year-and-a-half.
 - Canned foods can be heated indoors with candle warmers or chafing dishes.
 - Outside, use a charcoal grill, hibachi or camp stove removing the paper label from the can so it doesn't burn.
- Smoked or dried meats like beef jerky
- Juices--canned, powdered or crystallized
- Soups--bouillon cubes or dried "soups in a cup"
- Milk--powdered or canned
- Staples--sugar, salt, pepper
- High energy foods--peanut butter, jelly, crackers, nuts, trail mix
- Stress foods--sugar cookies, hard candy, sweetened cereals
- Vitamins
- 1 gallon of water per person per day (3 gallons per person)

When putting together your emergency supplies, store foods your family normally eats, plus favorite treats.

- Avoid stocking foods that are high in salt that will increase thirst.
- Store foods in small serving sizes.
 - Without refrigeration, "leftovers" can lead to food poisoning.
- Don't forget canned and non-perishable pet foods.
- Store one or two manual can openers with your emergency food supply.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF OUR FOOD?

After a quake, you know you can count on your emergency food supply. But, does that mean that all the food in the refrigerator and freezer is "spoiled?"

According to experts from USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline, food in the refrigerator and freezer is more at risk when the power goes out, but loss of power doesn't necessarily mean loss of food.

Generally, food in the refrigerator is safe as long as the power is out no more than a few hours and the temperature in the refrigerator remains at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below.

- Food in a **full** free-standing freezer will be safe for about two days at zero degrees Fahrenheit
- a **half-full** freezer for about one day.
 - If the freezer isn't full, group together packages so they form an igloo shape, protecting each other.
 - Group meat and poultry to one side or on a tray so their juices won't contaminate other foods if they begin to thaw.

At greatest risk:

- Meat and poultry
- Food containing milk, cream, sour cream or soft cheese.

You can't rely on appearance or odor to tell you whether a food will make you sick. If perishable foods have been at room temperature for more than two hours, disease-causing bacteria may have multiplied enough to cause illness. When in doubt, throw it out!