

PRESERVING FOOD WHEN A STORM HITS HOME

When power is out for a few hours or a few days, what can you do to keep cold storage items from spoiling? Here's what I've discovered after extensive research and consulting with my father, a retired professor of food science.

- Keep the refrigerator or freezer door shut to minimize the loss of cold air. The temperature needs to stay below 40 degrees Fahrenheit (4 degrees Celsius). To check the temperature, keep a portable thermometer on the top shelf of each unit. Freezer temperature should maintain ice crystals—that means it should be at or below 5 degrees F (-15 C) to keep quality. Frozen meat that has partially thawed but still has ice crystals can be safely refrozen. Chest freezers keep foods frozen longer.

- If the refrigerator is unopened, the food inside should be safe for at least four hours. Most full freezers keep food frozen for two days if the doors remain closed. If the freezer is half full, however, you'll need to quickly group food together to preserve the cold; still, it may stay frozen for only a day. If thawing does start, meat products that still have ice crystals when the freezer starts working again can be safely refrozen and eaten later.

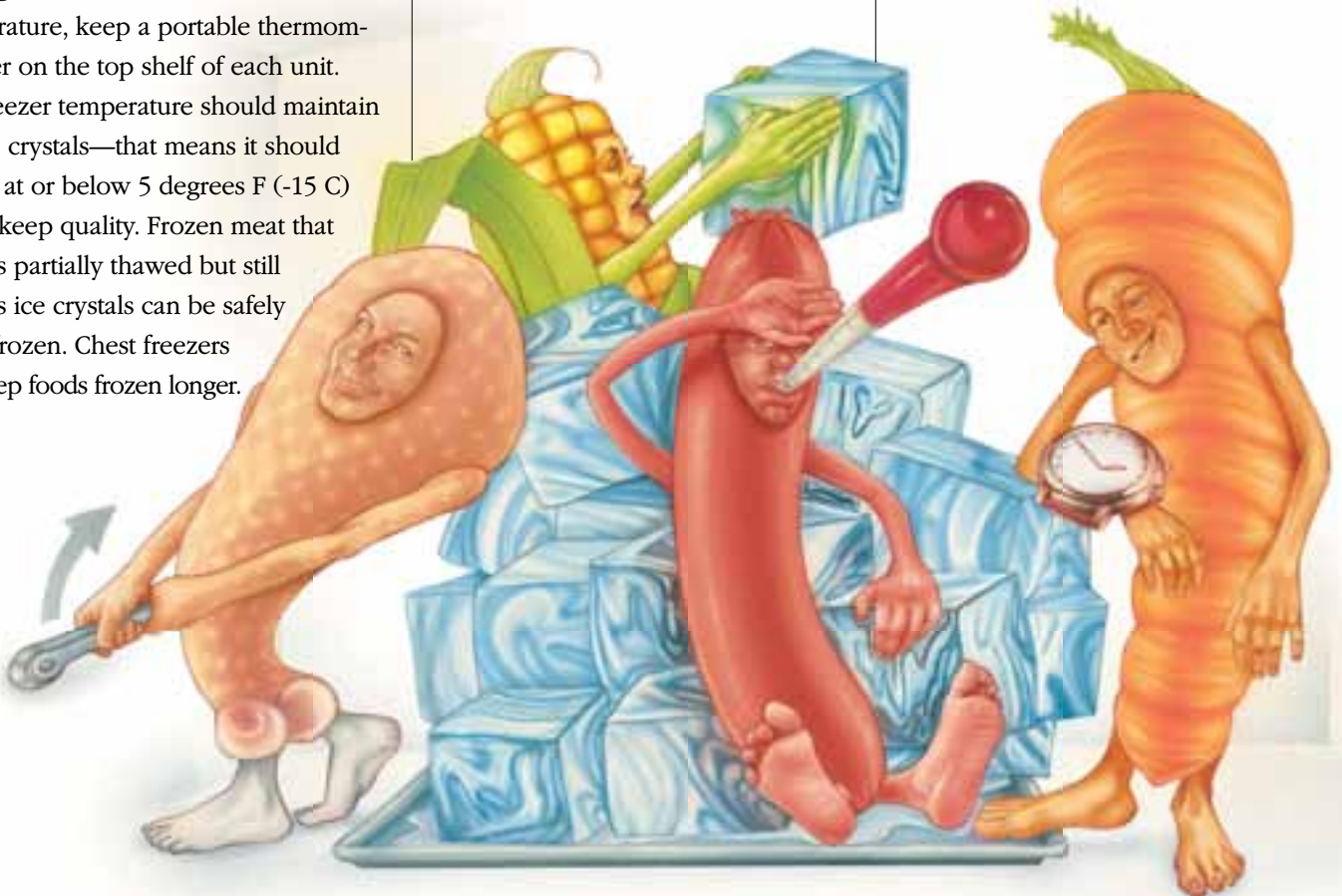
- As a preventive measure, don't leave the freezer low on food. If it tends to be near empty, fill plastic gallon bottles with water and keep them frozen in the freezer.

- Put trays beneath frozen food in

case it begins to thaw and leak. If you have to move items to other locations, trays will help you move food faster.

- Add bagged or block ice to the refrigerator or freezer if the power isn't restored quickly or if a technician can't come immediately.

- If the power outage continues and the freezer's cooling ability is still affected, use camping coolers. Put the most-valued items in the coolers and pack the top with bagged or large block ice. You'll need about two 10-pound bags per day to chill a loaded 60-quart cooler. Remember to drain the coolers regularly as the ice melts, particularly if your food is not in waterproof containers, or start cooking the food.





Cyber Family Home Evening

Weekly family home evening: that was our goal. My wife and I prayed and read scriptures together each day. But we struggled to hold family home evening on a regular basis. Since we don't have children, it seemed a little strange to do the same things we usually do together and call it "family home evening."

Soon after we set our goal, I received a new job offer in a different state. The employer needed me right away and I had to move into temporary housing for a month before my wife could join me. Among other challenges that came was the difficulty in keeping our family home evening

goal. We wanted to keep our commitment, but I couldn't fly back home every Monday night.

The solution turned out to be simple: we would use the Internet. We took turns each week preparing a lesson. Often we would use talks we found on LDS.org. On Monday nights, we would each say a prayer before connecting via an instant-messaging program. We would then access the lesson material in our Web browsers and read it together. We then discussed the material and shared personal insights—all

through instant messages we typed to one another. After the lesson, we would pause to allow each other time to say a closing prayer. Then we would play chess, Chinese checkers, or some other game together over the Internet.

Our cyber family home evenings became a good way for us to remain closely connected while we lived in different states. Best of all, we were able to keep our Monday-night commitment.

Anthony Hart, Utah, USA



- If you are worried about the quality of food once the refrigerator and freezer are working again, throw it away. Dealing with food-borne illness isn't worth the risk.

- Store a variety of shelf-stable foods. Many freezer foods, including meat, can also be canned and stored on your pantry shelf.

- Keep this information and other handy references in an emergency preparedness binder or folder.

Marti Johnson, California, and John Hal Johnson, Utah, USA

OPEN FOR SERVICE

Do you want to give back to your community and find more purpose in your life? That was how I felt a few years ago after my husband passed away suddenly. Initially I had preconceived ideas about how and where I wanted to volunteer. But those opportunities didn't materialize. I prayerfully considered other options and was blessed with two wonderful experiences.

I eventually contacted the local high school. Soon I was approached about helping a chemistry teacher who had multiple sclerosis. How could I, an English major, help with chemistry experiments and labs? I wasn't sure it could work, but I agreed to meet with him. During that same visit, the school principal, who was obviously delighted to have a volunteer, asked if I could also help

a special education teacher. I soon agreed to both volunteer opportunities because I also have disabilities and know what it is like to try to lead a fulfilling life despite the setbacks and limitations.

Through these opportunities I gained tremendous insight. As I helped the teens in special education and helped the teachers, the Lord helped me through some trying times with my own young adult children. As I helped the chemistry

teacher with tasks that sapped his energy, I felt so needed. Because of me, he could continue to do what he loves. His example inspired me to persevere in my own life despite my challenges.

I testify that Heavenly Father knows the righteous desires of our hearts. Opportunities to serve open our heart to lessons of love. As we reach out to others, He will help us in ways that we can't imagine.

Shelley L. Nelson, Minnesota, USA