

Keep Food Safe During Power Failures

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Despite all our technological advances, we are still subject to the whims of nature, as recent storms and the resulting power failures demonstrated. County offices of the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service (MCES) were deluged with phone calls from consumers wondering how to keep food cold in refrigerators and freezers and how to know which foods were safe to consume after hours or days without electricity.

And while we all hope we don't experience such fierce or destructive weather again soon, thunder-and-lightning storms are common during the summer months and often cause local power failures. It makes sense, therefore, to be prepared, says Dr. Mark A. Kantor,

an MCES nutrition specialist, who offers the following advice.

"First of all, purchase thermometers for the freezer and refrigerator so you can keep track of the temperature in case the power fails. The thermometers should be sturdy and designed specifically for this use. Many hardware stores and supermarkets carry them."

If your electricity is cut off, Dr. Kantor advises calling the power company to find out how long you can expect to be without electricity. Or listen to your radio for announcements from the power company.

"If it's only a few hours, you don't have to do anything... except avoid opening the refrigerator and freezer doors. But if the power

failure is expected to last longer than that, you'll need to take some steps to ensure the safety of your food supply," he says.

If you're lucky enough to have a full freezer, Kantor notes, you can expect food to remain frozen for two days. A half-full freezer will keep food frozen for about one day, although you may be able to extend this time by grouping packages together so they retain the cold more effectively.

You can also help keep food frozen longer by adding dry ice to your freezer. Twenty-five pounds of dry ice should hold a 10-cubic-foot full freezer below freezing for three to four days. If the freezer is half full, the same amount of ice will keep it stable for two to three days.

If possible, find out where you can get dry ice before you need it. Utility companies often distribute dry ice free of charge during extended power outages. Listen to your radio for announcements regarding distribution points.

Also, learn how to handle dry ice properly.

"Never touch it with your bare hands," Kantor stresses. "It can freeze your skin quite badly. Instead, transport it in a cardboard box that you can place directly in the freezer, or wear heavy gloves and use tongs when handling it." Keep the dry ice away from food items or place a piece of cardboard between the ice and food so items don't stick to it.

(When dry ice vaporizes, it drives out the surrounding oxygen, so don't stick your head into the freezer and breathe the

vapors.)

After a power failure, food will usually keep for four to six hours in a refrigerator, depending upon how warm your kitchen is. If power will be out for longer than that, you may want to add block ice to the refrigerator. Don't use dry ice; it can freeze refrigerated items.

You can help insulate your refrigerator and/or freezer by covering it with a blanket, which will help prevent the loss of cold air. Just make sure you don't cover the air vents in case the power comes back on.

Once power has been restored, it's time to assess the damage. The following guidelines will help you decide which items to keep and which to throw out.

If ice crystals are visible on frozen food and its temperature has remained at 40 degrees or below, it is safe to refreeze, although the quality of some items may suffer. If the food has thawed completely but still feels cold, cook it right away and then serve or refreeze.

In the case of meat, Kantor recommends using it in a recipe that allows for well-done rather than rare preparation. For example, cut a roast into thin strips and stir-fry, or use ground beef for spaghetti sauce rather than rare hamburgers.

Some foods can tolerate less time/temperature abuse than others. For example, fresh meats, poultry, lunch meats, hot dogs, eggs and milk should be discarded if they have been subjected to temperature of 40 degrees or higher for more than two hours; bacteria that cause food poisoning can multiply to unsafe levels under these conditions.

Fruits and vegetables, on the other hand, can be cooked and served as long as there is no yeasty smell, sliminess or evidence of mold. Juices can be used, provided they look and smell acceptable, and well-wrapped hard cheeses, butter and margarine can be kept unless mold or rancid odors develop.

Arabian Gelding Is Prize In Raffle

MANHEIM (Lancaster Co.) — SS Samisands, the newest resident at Wishful Acres here, will be awarded to one lucky horse lover during the Devon Horse Show on August 5. The registered Arabian gelding is the prize in a raffle sponsored by the Pennsylvania Arabian Horse Association.

Donated by Mr. and Mrs. Everett Shea of Windfall Farms in St. Marys, Pa., the gray horse has already been shown at two A-rated

shows and won at-halter classes. He is sired by Desert Sands.

The raffle benefits the organization's youth group and will be used for things such as prize money for contests and projects and for a one-day clinic. Tickets are \$1 each or six for \$5 and are available to any interested person up to the time of the drawing.

To buy a ticket or see Samisand, contact Holly Wolgemuth at 717/664-3893.

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4-H Fashion

(Continued from Page B14)

A tailored, double-breasted wool coat tops the rayon front-pleated pants and polyester tucked blouse Stacy Ann Reaver created for her fashion project. A 4-H seamstress for 11 years, Stacy is a sophomore at Mount Saint Mary's College, majoring in elementary education.

Flowing blue and white satin was Sarah Garman's choice for the prom gown she styled for her

4-H fashion project. A sweetheart neckline and yards of bias cut ruffles shaped with elastic add graceful touches to the floor-length gown.

From ten honorees at the state level will be selected Pennsylvania's Fashion Revue Representative to the National 4-H Fashion Revue, held annually during the 4-H Club Congress in Chicago, during December.

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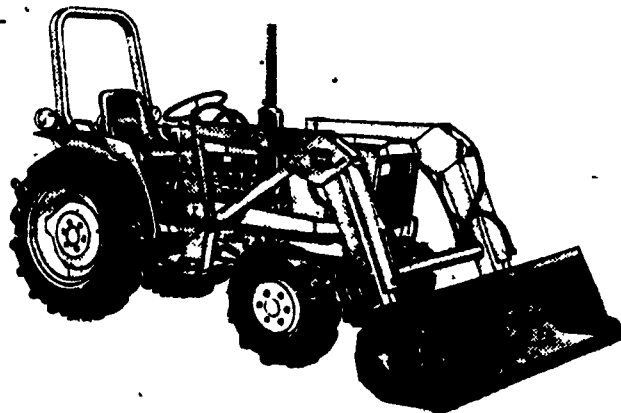
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