After the Power Has Been Out: Food Safety Concerns

Identify and throw away food that may not be safe to eat.

- Throw away food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Wash fruits and vegetables with water from a safe source before eating.

How to determine if food from the refrigerator and freezer is safe to eat:

- Refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was out for no more than 4 hours and the refrigerator door was kept shut. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, seafood, dairy products or leftovers) that has been above 40°F for two hours or more.
- If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, check the temperature when the power comes back on. If the freezer thermometer reads 40°F or below, the food is safe and may be refrozen.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine its safety. You can't rely on appearance or odor. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40 °F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.

Keep in mind that perishable food such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk, and eggs that are not kept adequately refrigerated or frozen may cause illness if consumed, even when they are thoroughly cooked.

For more information please visit:
Centers for Disease Control - http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/foodwater/facts.asp
Food & Drug Administration - http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm076881.htm

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