

Disaster Relief

Cooperative Extension Service
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Helping You Put Knowledge To Work

Preparing Food During a Power Failure

During a power failure, cooking and eating habits must change to fit the situation. You may have no heat, no refrigeration and limited water. In addition, health risks from contaminated or spoiled food may increase.

Conserve Fuel

Consider the amount of cooking time needed for particular foods. If you have limited heat for cooking, choose foods which cook quickly. Prepare one-dish meals or serve no-cook foods.

Commercially -canned foods can be eaten straight from the can. Do not use home-canned vegetables unless you have the means to boil them for 20 minutes before eating.

Alternative Cooking Methods

Charcoal or gas grills are the most obvious alternative sources of heat for cooking. NEVER USE THEM INDOORS. In doing so, you risk both asphyxiation from carbon monoxide and the chance of starting a fire that could destroy your home

Likewise, camp stoves that use gasoline or solid fuel should always be used outdoors.

Wood can be used for cooking in many situations. You can cook in a fireplace if the chimney is sound. Don't start a fire in a fireplace that has a broken chimney. Be sure the damper is open.

If you're cooking on a wood stove, make sure the stove pipe has not been damaged.

If you have to build a fire outside, build it away from buildings, never in a carport. Sparks can easily start a house fire.

Never use gasoline to get a wood or charcoal fire started.

Make sure any fire is well-contained. A metal drum or stones around the fire bed are good precautions. A charcoal grill is a good place in which to build a wood fire. Be sure to put out the fire when you are through with it.

Small electrical appliances, such as electric skillets, electric woks, hot plates or coffee makers, can be used to prepare meals if you have access to an electrical generator.

Devices using candle warmers, such as fondue pots or chafing dishes, may be used if no other heat sources are available.

The Cooperative Extension Service of the University of Illinois provides educational programs and research-based information to help Illinois residents improve their quality of life, develop skills and solve problems, by helping you put knowledge to work.