

## Message from the Parish Nurses

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### POWER OUTAGE

#### ~ FOOD SAFETY ~

The motto “always be prepared” is a good one to keep in mind. During the winter, high winds, severe ice and snow storms play havoc with our outdoor utility lines. It is not uncommon for people to be without power for a few days or even a week. Having safe water to drink and storing food safely become a challenge if the power goes out. Read more about the steps to follow before, during, and after power outage.

#### PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME

- **Appliance thermometers.** Make sure you have appliance thermometers in both refrigerator and the freezer. Check to ensure that the refrigerator temperatures are 40°F or lower and the freezer temperatures are 0°F or lower. In case of a power outage, the appliance thermometers will give you the temperatures in the refrigerator and the freezer to help you determine if your food is safe to eat.
- **Freeze water in one-quart plastic bags or small containers.** They are small enough to fit around the food in your refrigerator and freezer to help keep food cold. The melting ice will also give you drinking water. Don't fill the bags to full because water expands when it freezes and the bags may split.
- **Freeze refrigerated items.** You can freeze milk, leftovers, and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need immediately. This will help keep them at a safe temperature longer.
- **Group foods together in freezer.** This helps the food stay cold longer.
- **Make extra ice cubes in advance.** Freeze gel packs ahead of time and store these in your freezer for further use when power goes out.
- **Have coolers on hand.** Inexpensive Styrofoam coolers work well to keep refrigerator food cold if the power will be out for more than 4 hours. Know where you can purchase dry ice or block ice in case you should need them.
- **Don't put food outdoors in the snow or ice.** Animals just may be looking for a meal or when the sun comes up it may be warm enough to make the food unsafe.
- **Stock up** on ready-to-eat-food and a good supply of bottled water.

#### WHEN THE POWER GOES OUT

- **Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.** The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold its temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if half full) if the door remains closed.
- **Place frozen meats and poultry** on a tray or pan that has sides. If they begin to thaw, their juices will not drip on other food.
- **Buy dry or block ice.** Ice will keep the refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a long period of time. Fifty pounds of dry ice should keep fully-stocked 18 cubic foot freezer for two days.
- **Eating refrigerated or frozen foods.** If you are eating meat, poultry, fish, or eggs while they are still at a safe temperature, it is important that they are cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature to insure that any foodborne bacteria that may be present are destroyed.
- **Use your non-perishable foods and staples** after using food from the refrigerator and freezer.

#### WHEN THE POWER COMES BACK ON

##### Determine the safety of your food

- **Check the temperature inside your refrigerator and freezer.** Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, milk, cheese, casseroles, stews, soups, or leftovers) that has been thawed and held above 40°F for 2 hours or more.
- **Check each item separately.** Throw out any food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture, or feels warm to the touch.
- **Thawed or partially thawed food** in the freezer may be refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is at 40°F or below. Partial thawing and refreezing may affect the quality of some food, but the food will be safe to eat. However, discard ice cream and frozen yogurt.
- **Never taste a food** or rely on appearance or odor to determine its safety. Some foods may look and smell okay, but if they have been at room temperature too long, bacteria causing food-borne illness can start growing quickly.

By Barbara Mueller, RN, Faith Community Nurse

More information can be found at:

[www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/type-of-emergencies/power-outage](http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/type-of-emergencies/power-outage)  
[https://foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/frozen\\_food.html](https://foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/frozen_food.html)  
[https://foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/refridg\\_food.html](https://foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/refridg_food.html)

Visit: [www.StAgnesShepherdstown.org](http://www.StAgnesShepherdstown.org) for “Learn How to Stay Safe and Healthy with This Festive Song” (12 Days of Christmas).

## **LEARN HOW to STAY SAFE and HEALTHY with THIS SONG (12 Days of Christmas)**

1. The first way to health, said the CDC to me Wash hands to be safe and healthy.
2. The second way to health, said the CDC to me Bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.
3. The third way to health, said the CDC to me Manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.
4. The fourth way to health, said the CDC to me Don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.
5. The fifth way to health, said the CDC to me Be Smoke-Free, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.
6. The sixth way to health, said the CDC to me Fasten belts while driving, Be Smoke-Free, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.
7. The seventh way to health, said the CDC to me Get exams and screenings, fasten belts while driving, Be Smoke-Free, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.
8. The eighth way to health, said the CDC to me Get your vaccinations, get exams and screenings, fasten belts while driving, Be Smoke-Free, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.
9. The ninth way to health, said the CDC to me Monitor the children, get your vaccinations, get exams and screenings, fasten belts while driving, Be Smoke-Free, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash hands to be safe and healthy.
10. The tenth way to health, said the CDC to me Practice fire safety, monitor the children, get your vaccinations, get exams and screenings, fasten belts while driving, Be Smoke-Free, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash your hands to be safe and healthy.
11. The eleventh way to health, said the CDC to me Prepare dinner safely, practice fire safety, monitor the children, get your vaccinations, get exams and screenings, fasten belts while driving, Be Smoke-Free, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash your hands to be safe and healthy.
12. The twelfth way to health, said the CDC to me Eat well and get moving, prepare dinner safely, practice fire safety, monitor the children, get your vaccinations, get exams and screenings, fasten belts while driving, Be Smoke-Free, don't drink and drive, manage stress, bundle up for warmth, and wash your hands to be safe and healthy.

Happy Holidays!

Podcast can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/family/holiday/12ways.htm>