



An Extended Guide · No. 1791

A Senior-Friendly Quick Plan

The whole thing, simple and clear

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

BillsHomeTech.com · (330) 200-8042 · Atwater, Ohio

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! Read this first — when in doubt, throw it out

Here is the one rule that keeps your family safe when the power goes out: when in doubt, throw it out. Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors shut, and know the clock — a closed refrigerator keeps food safe for about 4 hours, and a full freezer holds its cold for about 48 hours (about 24 hours if it is only half full). Any perishable food — meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, soft cheese, cut fruit, and leftovers — that has been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for 2 hours or more should be thrown out. Never taste food to decide whether it is safe; many of the germs that cause food poisoning leave no smell, taste, or change you can see. This is the short, no-fuss version — for you, or to hand to a parent.

The whole plan, made simple

This is the simplest version of everything in this series, gathered onto just a few easy pages.

I'm Bill. I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've written a whole stack of guides about keeping food safe when the power goes out. This one is the short version — the plain, calm heart of all of them.

Keep it for yourself. Or print it and hand it to a parent, a grandparent, or anyone you love who could use a simple plan. There is nothing complicated here, and nothing you need to memorize.

★ Keep me close by too

Tape my number to the fridge: (330) 200-8042. If anything in this guide ever feels unclear, just call. I'm glad to help.

If you read nothing else, read this

Here is the entire guide in seven short lines.

- ❑ Keep the doors shut. That is rule number one.
- ❑ A closed refrigerator keeps food safe for about 4 hours.
- ❑ A full freezer keeps food safe for about 48 hours.
- ❑ Anything above 40 degrees for 2 hours or more gets thrown out.
- ❑ Trust a thermometer, not your nose. Food can look fine and still be unsafe.
- ❑ Write down the time the power went out. It makes everything else easy.
- ❑ When in doubt, throw it out. Always.

✓ Read it once, then relax

You do not need to remember every word. Just knowing these seven lines exist is enough for most outages.

Three numbers. That is really all of it.

Food safety during an outage comes down to three simple numbers. Learn these, and you know almost everything you need.

The first number is 4. A closed refrigerator keeps food safe for about 4 hours. The second number is 48. A full freezer keeps food safe for about 48 hours, as long as the door stays shut.

The third number is 2. If a perishable food — meat, milk, eggs, or leftovers — sits above 40 degrees for 2 hours or more, it is time to throw it out. Not taste it. Not smell it. Just let it go.

! Three numbers, one simple rule

4 hours for the fridge. 48 hours for a full freezer. 2 hours above 40 degrees means toss it. When in doubt, throw it out.

Rule one: keep the doors shut

This is the single easiest thing you can do, and it costs nothing at all.

Every time a door opens, the cold air spills out and warm air rushes in. The fewer times the doors open, the longer your food stays safe.

So during an outage, only open the fridge or freezer when you truly need something. Decide what you want before you open the door. Grab it fast, and shut the door again right away.

✓ It really is that simple

No tools, no cost, no special skill. Just keep the doors shut, and you have already done the most important thing on this whole list.

Rule two: trust the thermometer

Your eyes and your nose mean well, but they can be fooled. A thermometer cannot.

Keep a simple appliance thermometer in the fridge, and another in the freezer, all the time — not just during an outage. They cost very little, and they tell the truth every time.

The fridge should read 40 degrees or below. The freezer should read 0 degrees or below. After an outage, that same number tells you exactly what you need to know, with no guessing involved.

✓ Put them in today

Do not wait for an outage to buy a thermometer. Put one in the fridge and one in the freezer now, and you will never have to guess later.

Rule three: when in doubt, throw it out

This is the rule that protects you when you are not sure about anything else.

Never taste food to test whether it is safe. Many of the germs that cause food poisoning do not change how food looks, smells, or tastes at all. A tiny taste can be enough to make you sick.

A tossed meal is a small loss. Getting sick is not. If you are ever unsure, let the food go. It is always the safer choice.

! When in doubt, throw it out

Say it to yourself as often as you need to. It is the simplest, safest rule in this whole guide.

Write down the time the power went out

This one small habit makes every other rule in this guide easy to use.

The moment you notice the power is out, grab a sticky note and write down the time. Stick it right on the fridge door.

Now the 4-hour and 2-hour rules are simple arithmetic instead of a guessing game. You will know exactly when to move food to a cooler, and exactly when something has been warm too long.

✓ No pen handy? Use your phone

A quick photo of a clock, or a note in your phone, works just as well as paper. The important thing is writing the time down the moment you notice.

A cooler and some ice go a long way

You do not need a generator to protect your food. A simple cooler and some ice can carry you through most outages.

After about 4 hours — or right away if you already have ice on hand — move the most fragile food into a cooler packed with ice. Think meat, milk, eggs, and leftovers first.

Keep the cooler somewhere cool and shady, and slip a thermometer inside it too, if you have a spare one. A full cooler holds its cold longer than a half-empty one.

✓ Make your own ice ahead of time

Freeze some jugs of water before a storm even arrives. Leave a little room at the top of each jug for the ice to expand.

Keep your phone charged, and my number handy

A charged phone and a friendly number to call take a lot of the worry out of an outage.

Before a storm, charge your phone all the way. If you have a small battery pack, charge that too. A phone lets you check on family, report the outage, and call for help if you need it.

Tape my number to the fridge, right next to your sticky note with the time. That way, if anything about this guide ever feels confusing, help is one call away.

★ Call anytime you're unsure

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042. There is no such thing as a silly question during an outage.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

This guide works everywhere, but a couple of small things differ depending on where you live.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, outages are usually short, and a simple cooler with ice is often all the backup you need.

- A short outage usually fits easily inside the 4-hour and 48-hour cushions.
- A cooler and a bag of ice from a nearby store is a simple, easy backup.
- One fridge and maybe one freezer keeps the whole plan simple.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, outages often run longer, and there is usually more food to protect — a big chest freezer is common. If you are on a private well, remember the well pump needs power too.

- A bigger freezer means more food to protect, so keep it as full as you can.
- Keep a little extra ice on hand, since help and stores may be farther away.
- If you are on a well, the pump shares your backup plan right along with the fridge.

★ Not sure which one describes you?

Plenty of homes are a little of both. Tell me what you're protecting, and I'll help you build a plan that fits. Call (330) 200-8042.

Getting ready before a storm arrives

A few minutes of prep, done ahead of time, makes the whole outage easier.

- ☐ Turn the fridge and freezer a little colder than usual.
- ☐ Freeze a couple of water jugs to fill empty space.
- ☐ Make extra ice, or buy a bag, for the cooler.
- ☐ Charge your phone, and any battery packs you have.

✓ Do this the day before, if you can

A storm warning is the perfect time for this short list. It takes only a few minutes and buys you real peace of mind.

What to do the moment the power goes out

When the lights actually go out, just work through this short list in order.

- ☐ Keep the doors shut, starting right now.
- ☐ Write down the time the power went out.
- ☐ After about 4 hours, move perishables to a cooler with ice.
- ☐ Check the thermometer before you decide anything is safe.

★ That's the whole plan

Four simple steps. Nothing to memorize, nothing to overthink. And if you get stuck, call me at (330) 200-8042.

Who to call during an outage

A short list of the right people to call takes the guesswork out of a stressful moment.

Start with family close by, so someone knows what is going on. Then call your electric utility to report the outage — they often cannot fix what they do not know about.

- Family nearby, so someone knows you are okay.
- Your electric utility, to report the outage.
- Bill's Home Tech, for anything food-safety or tech related.

✓ Keep the numbers together

Write these numbers on the same card as your sticky note. One glance gives you everyone you might need, including me at (330) 200-8042.

A kind afternoon's work for adult kids

If you are reading this on behalf of a parent, thank you. This is one of the kindest afternoons you can spend with them.

Sit down together and set up the whole simple plan: a thermometer in the fridge and one in the freezer, a cooler within reach, some ice in the freezer, and my number taped where they will see it.

Walk through the three numbers and the three rules together, out loud, once. That is usually enough. The goal is not a complicated system — it is a calm parent who knows exactly what to do.

★ I'm glad to help set it up

If you would rather I came out and helped set this up in person, that is exactly what I do. Call (330) 200-8042.

Helping from a distance

You do not have to live nearby to help a parent through an outage.

A simple phone call walks them through the same short list in this guide. Ask when the power went out, remind them to keep the doors shut, and help them watch the clock together.

Some families also like a small Wi-Fi freezer alarm, which sends a phone alert if the freezer warms up too much. It is one more way to keep an eye on things when you cannot be there in person.

✓ A shared checklist helps everyone

Send this guide to your parent, and keep a copy for yourself too. Then you are both looking at the same simple plan.

When the lights come back on

Do not assume everything is fine just because the power is back. One quick check settles it.

Read the thermometer first. If the fridge held at 40 degrees or below, its food is fine. If freezer food still has ice crystals, or reads 40 degrees or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.

Anything that sat above 40 degrees for 2 hours or more should be thrown out, no matter how it looks or smells. When in doubt, you already know the rule.

! Let the thermometer decide

Not your eyes, not your nose — the number on the thermometer. It is the one thing in the kitchen that cannot be fooled.

A few easy mistakes to avoid

Most food that gets thrown out unnecessarily — or eaten when it shouldn't be — comes down to one of these.

- **Peeking in the fridge 'just to check'** lets cold air out every single time.
- **Trusting your nose instead of a thermometer**, when many unsafe foods have no smell at all.
- **Forgetting to write down the time**, which turns an easy rule into a guess.
- **Leaving the freezer half empty**, when a couple of frozen jugs would help it hold cold much longer.
- **Not owning a thermometer**, which is the cheapest, simplest tool in this whole guide.

! Small habits, big difference

None of these mistakes are anyone's fault — they are just easy to make. Now that you know them, they are just as easy to avoid.

You do not have to memorize any of this

This whole guide is meant to be kept nearby, not learned by heart.

Print it, or keep it wherever you keep other home papers. A copy stuck on the fridge, or tucked in a kitchen drawer, means you can flip back to any page the moment you need it.

There is no test here, and no pressure to remember every detail. Just knowing this guide exists, and where to find it, is enough.

✓ One page is often all you need

In the middle of an outage, most people just need the big-print fridge card — the three numbers and three rules, all in one place.

Take a breath — most outages turn out fine

If the power is out right now and you are worried, here is some good news.

Most outages are shorter than people expect, and most food comes through them just fine. Your fridge and freezer hold their cold far longer than most people realize.

You do not need a generator, a big stockpile, or a complicated system. A calm plan, the three numbers, and the three rules in this guide are genuinely enough for almost everyone.

★ And if you're still worried

Call me. Talking it through with a real person, even for two minutes, tends to help more than any checklist. (330) 200-8042.

Print this page. Stick it on the fridge.

Big print, on purpose. This is the one page to keep closest at hand.

- ☐ Fridge: safe for about 4 hours, doors shut.
- ☐ Full freezer: safe for about 48 hours, doors shut.
- ☐ Above 40 degrees for 2 hours or more: throw it out.
- ☐ Rule one: keep the doors shut.
- ☐ Rule two: trust the thermometer, not your nose.
- ☐ Rule three: when in doubt, throw it out.

★ My number belongs on this card too

Tape it right here: (330) 200-8042. Call anytime.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most, answered as simply as I can.

Q: How long is my food safe once the power goes out?

About 4 hours for a closed fridge, and about 48 hours for a full freezer. Keep the doors shut the whole time.

Q: How do I know if it's still good?

Trust a thermometer, not your nose. If it's been above 40 degrees for 2 hours or more, throw it out.

Q: Do I need a generator?

Usually not. A cooler with ice covers most outages just fine. A generator only helps if outages run long or happen often.

Q: What do I do first?

Write down the time, and keep the doors shut. Those two things buy you all the time you need to think.

Q: Who do I call?

Call me. Food-safety questions during an outage are one of the most common calls I get, and I'm always glad to help.

★ Still wondering about something?

There's no such thing as a silly question. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made keeping your food safe with a simple outage plan feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't do the licensed electrical or gas work myself — for that I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

The Three Numbers

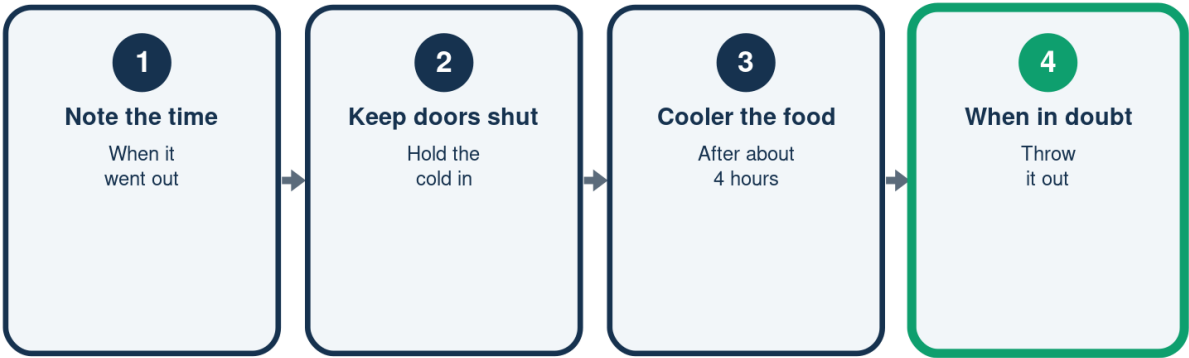
Remember just these

	The Number	What It Means
Refrigerator	About 4 hours	Then cooler it
Full freezer	About 48 hours	Half: about 24
Above 40, 2 hrs	Toss it	Don't risk it
Golden rule	When in doubt	Throw it out

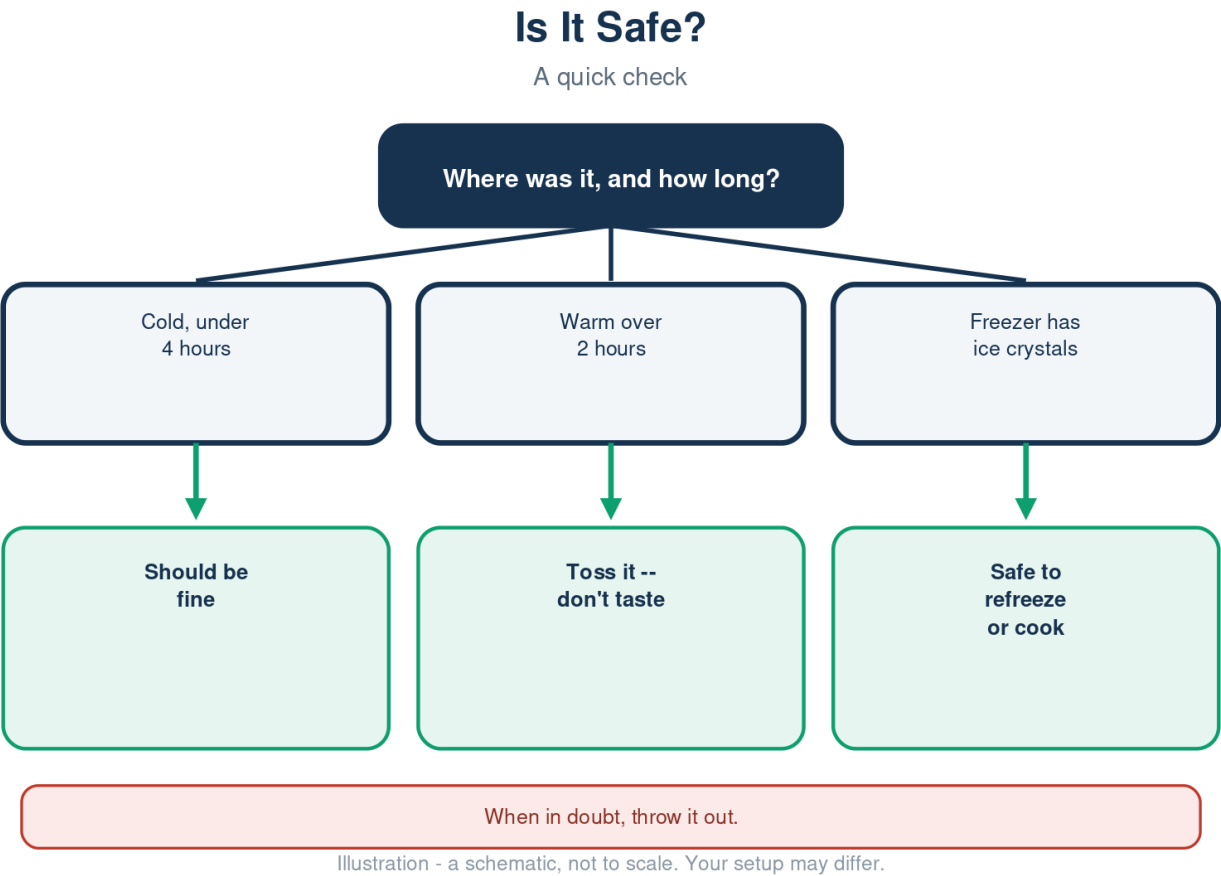
Three numbers cover almost everything.

Your Simple Plan

Four calm steps



You don't have to remember it all – keep this on the fridge.



Keep It Simple

A little goes a long way

	Tool	Cost
Doors shut	Buys hours	Free
A thermometer	Tells the truth	Cheap
Cooler and ice	Bridges the gap	Cheap
Bill's number	A friendly hand	Handy

Simple habits keep your food safe.



Need a Real Person?

You do not have to remember all of it.
You just have to remember you can call.
Friendly, in-home tech help -- I come to you.

BILL'S PROMISE

If you are not 100% happy with a visit, I will
make it right -- or refund it. No awkwardness,
no fine print. That is how I would want to be treated.

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

Bill@BillsHomeTech.com · Mon–Sat 9:00 AM – 7:30 PM

— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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