Date:

**[INSERT TOWN HEADER]**

**FOOD SAFETY DURING A POWER OUTAGE**

The biggest food safety concern during a power outage is the condition of potentially hazardous food such as meats, eggs, dairy products, cooked vegetables, and cut fruit/melons. Potentially hazardous foods are perishable foods that are usually moist, non-acidic and must be refrigerated and kept at a temperature below 41 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) for safety.

If you lose electricity for more than 4 hours you want to be careful with potentially hazardous foods in your refrigerator. Once any potentially hazardous food goes above 41°F, harmful bacteria may begin to grow putting you and your family at risk for a food borne illness. The food in your freezer will last longer, but you should still use caution and evaluate this food. If the food in your freezer was above 41°F for any period of time, harmful bacteria may begin to grow and refreezing this food when the power comes back on does not kill bacteria.

Here are some tips to help you make an informed decision regarding your food once power is restored.

● When you first lose power, note the time so you can track how long your food will last. Power outages of 2 hours or less are not considered hazardous to food that was held properly when the outage began.

● Avoid opening refrigerators and freezers. When unopened, a refrigerator can keep food safely cold for about 4 hours. A full freezer can hold the temperature for up to 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) when the door remains closed.

● Always discard foods that are in the process of being cooked but haven’t reached their final cooking temperature and cannot be fully cooked without power.

● Keep appliance thermometers in the refrigerator and freezer at all times. When the power is out, an appliance thermometer will always indicate the temperature in the refrigerator and freezer.

● Never taste food to determine if it is safe! Each item should be evaluated separately. If an appliance thermometer was kept in the freezer, read the temperature when the power comes back on. If the appliance thermometer stored in the freezer 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 the safety. Remember you can’t rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals, it is safe to refreeze. Refrigerated food should be safe as long as power is out no more than 4 hours and the refrigerator doors have remained closed. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) that have been above 40 °F for 2 hours. **And remember: when in doubt, throw it out!**

For more information on saving and discarding foods, please visit the link below https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/refridg\_food.html