

# Food Safety Scoop



## Inside This Issue:

- Monsoon Season in the Southwest
- Humidity
- What to do During Power Outages
- What to Throw Away



## Food Safety Industry Council



This newsletter is brought to you by the Yavapai County Food Safety Industry Council, which is a joint collaboration between Yavapai County Community Health Services and the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension.

The FSIC meets bimonthly to discuss issues in the food service industry and ways to bring food safety information to the public.

For more information, please call 928-445-6590 ext. 227 or visit our website at: [extension.arizona.edu/yavapai/](http://extension.arizona.edu/yavapai/)

Brought to you by the Yavapai County Food Safety Industry Council

Summer 2021

## Monsoon Season in the Southwest

The word “monsoon” is derived from the Arabic word “mausim,” which means season. The monsoon season represents a change in the weather pattern. In Arizona, this pattern begins with the sun heating the land and the Pacific Ocean at different rates, resulting in low-pressure zones. A shift in winds collects the moisture-laden ocean air and mixes it with the hot, dry Arizona air, producing powerful thunderstorms and heavy rains in the area.

Dew point is another factor in determining the start of the monsoon season. When dew points are below 50°, the air

is generally too dry for widespread downpours. When dew points are at or above 54°, conditions are favorable in the atmosphere for storm development.

A typical monsoon season includes increased humidity, severe thunderstorms, flash floods, dust storms, and high winds. Increased humidity and a higher instance of power outages are two factors that have a direct impact on food safety. Preparing for weather-related power outages minimizes the potential loss of perishable food items and reduces the risk of foodborne illness.



This issue outlines how to prepare for these factors to ensure food safety during the Arizona monsoon season.

The National Weather Service declares June 15th—September 30th as the U.S. Southwest Monsoon Season in Arizona.

## Humidity

Food safety is a primary concern for every commercial kitchen area, including the refrigerated storage area. Summer weather can have a significant impact on appliances. Extreme heat, dust, and humidity, along with power outages, can influence the ability of a device to cool or maintain a specific temperature setting. Traditional refrigeration fluctuates as much as 15° during peak operating times, leaving food inside the unit at risk. The variance of the internal

temperature in a commercial refrigerator is dependent on how recently the compressor completed a cooling cycle, how frequently the door is opened and closed, and the temperature or humidity of the location of the appliance. During hot, humid weather:

1. Limit the number of times you open the refrigerator door to restrict warm, moist air from entering into the interior refrigeration cabinet.

2. Set your refrigerators a few degrees lower than 41°F to maintain a safe cold-holding temperature range.
3. Check the rubber gasket seals on your unit as they keep your refrigeration equipment sealed. Rubber can rot in high humidity.
4. Clean your condenser coil frequently, as a dusty coil will cause the compressor to run hotter and longer, eventually damaging it.

# What to Do During Power Outages



## References:

**National Weather Service:**  
<https://www.weather.gov/wrh/>

**A Consumer's Guide to Food Safety: Severe Storms and Hurricanes:**  
<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/emergencies/consumers-guide-food-safety-severe>

**Refrigerator Thermometers: Cold Facts about Food Safety:**  
[www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm253954.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm253954.htm)



Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods are of concern during power outages. TCS foods are usually low-acid, perishable foods that must remain at temperatures below 41°F or above 135°F or out of the danger zone. Meat, eggs, dairy, prepared food, and cut produce are TCS items most at risk for supporting the growth of harmful bacteria.

Here are some tips to preserve TCS foods during power outages:

1. Log food temperatures when the power goes out and when it comes back on.
2. Keep the doors of the refrigerator closed as much as possible.
3. Plan ahead and list where dry ice and block

ice can be purchased if needed.

4. Frozen food that has a temperature of 40°F or below can be safely refrozen or cooked. To be sure food is at the correct range, use an appliance thermometer to track the unit's temperature or a food thermometer to check each food package.

## What to Throw Away

*The following refrigerated foods should be discarded if kept above 41°F for more than 2 hours.*

### Meat, Poultry, Seafood

- Fresh or leftover meat, poultry, or seafood
- Thawing meat or poultry
- Meat, seafood, chicken, or egg salad
- Gravy or stuffing
- Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, or dried beef
- Pizza, with any topping
- Canned meats, opened

### Casseroles

- Soups
- Stews

### Cheese

- Soft Cheeses: Roquefort/blue, Brie, Camembert, cottage cheese, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, or Neufchâtel
- Shredded Cheeses

### Low-fat Cheeses

### Dairy

- Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, or yogurt

### Eggs

- Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, or egg products
- Custards and puddings

### Pies, Pastry

- Cream-filled, custard, cheese-filled, or chif-fon

### Sauces, Spreads, Jams

- Worcestershire
- Opened mayonnaise, tarter sauce, or horseradish
- Fish sauce (oyster sauce)
- Hoisin sauce
- Opened creamy dressing

### Bread, Cakes, Cookies, Pasta

- Cooked pasta
- Pasta salads (mayonnaise or vinaigrette)
- Fresh pasta
- Cheesecake

### Produce

- Greens, (pre-cut, washed, or packaged)
- Vegetables, cooked
- Vegetable juice, opened
- Potato salad or baked potatoes
- Commercial garlic oil
- Cut fresh fruit and vegetables

If you have further questions concerning when to discard food, contact your local health department.