

Prepare Kansas – Be A Step Ahead!

Shopper's Article for 9.19.2018. Submitted by Barbara Roths, Family Consumer Sciences Agent, Butler County Extension Office

Kansas may not have hurricanes, but we can claim tornadoes, floods, ice storms, and blizzards. Are you and your family prepared for these disasters? Do you have a family communication plan? How about your insurance coverage? Do you have some emergency funds put aside?

Prepare Kansas is the annual K-State Research and Extension online challenge that can help you focus on a few key activities to *prepare ahead of disasters*. September is National Preparedness Month, so there are activities highlighted each week:

Week 1: Make and Practice Your Plan – create an emergency plan for you and your family

Week 2: Learn Life Saving Skills –basic home maintenance, smoke alarms, turn off utilities

Week 3: Check Your Coverage – do you have a homeowner's policy? What is covered?

Week 4: Save for an Emergency – maintain emergency savings

Go to this web site for more details on each activity: <https://blogs.k-state.edu/preparekansas/>

Or check with the Butler County Extension Office for more information: 316.321.9660.

September is also National Food Safety Education Month. So let's prepare for food safety ahead of disasters AND know what to do with food in refrigerators or in freezers when we lose power.

- **What can I do ahead of a power outage? Put thermometers in each refrigerator and freezer unit.** Know where to buy ice/dry ice, if needed. Keep some food items in your cupboard that you can open (without an electric can opener!) and eat safely. Canned foods, such as fish, chicken, beans, fruits work well. Meats in pouches are another idea. Crackers and dry cereal can be tasty when you're stuck at home!
- **What can I do with refrigerated food when a power outage happens?** If possible, within four hours, add ice/dry ice to the refrigerator. When your refrigerator has been without power for 4 hours AND your food has not been on ice, check your refrigerator thermometer. If it's reading more than 40F, there are foods that are not safe to keep:
 - **meat, poultry, fish, and eggs; luncheon meat and hot dogs
 - **casseroles, soups, and pizza
 - **milk, yogurt, sour cream, and soft cheeses
 - **cooked or cut/peeled fruits and vegetables

Discard foods such as bread or fresh vegetables that may have been contaminated by juices dripping from raw meat, poultry, or fish.

- **What about frozen foods?** A freezer thermometer should normally read 0F. After a power outage, check your freezer thermometer for a reading of at least 40F or below. Add ice/dry ice to the freezer to keep the temperature below 40F. At 40F, you can safely refreeze frozen foods that have thawed, but contain ice crystals. However, the QUALITY (taste, texture) of the food will suffer.
- **“When in doubt, throw it out.”** You should NEVER taste food to determine if it is safe to eat. Even if food tastes okay, it could make you sick. If you notice that the food has an unusual color, odor, or texture, throw it out. We don't want to waste food, but the cost of throwing away questionable food is far less than the cost of getting sick or possibly dying from eating contaminated food.

Need more info? Contact Barb: Butler County Extension Office; 316 -321-9660; broths@ksu.edu