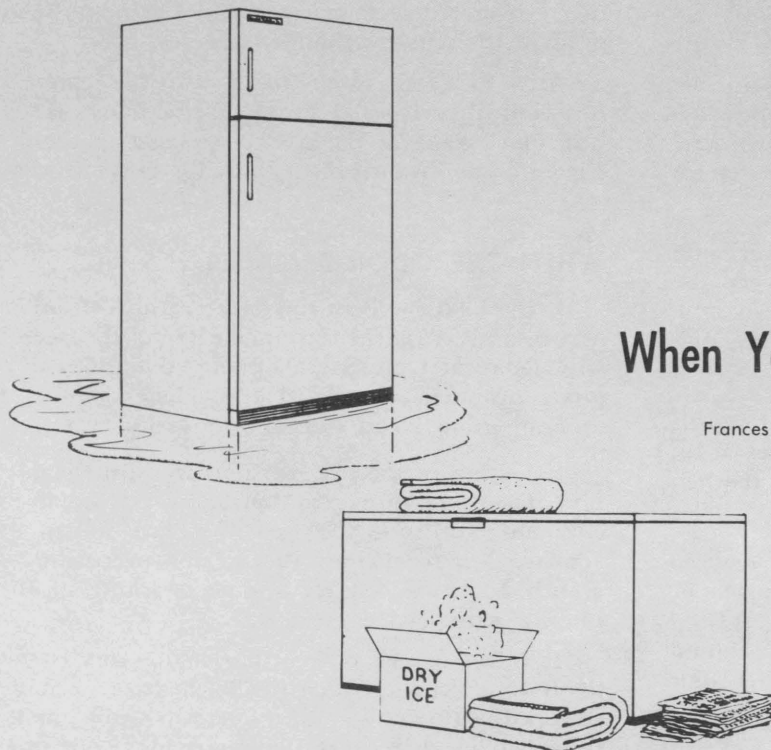


FACT SHEET

NP 10,000
5/27/77

L-1345



When Your Home Freezer Stops

Frances L. Reasonover and Lillian Chenoweth*

Occasionally food freezers stop operating normally and foods may be thawed or partially thawed before the situation is discovered. What can be done when this happens?

REFREEZING FOOD

You may safely refreeze foods that have thawed if they still contain ice crystals or if they are still cold—about 40° F—and have been held no longer than 1 or 2 days at refrigerator temperature after thawing. In general, if a food is safe to eat, it is safe to refreeze. If the odor or color of any food is poor or questionable, dispose of it. The food may be dangerous.

Foods that have been frozen and thawed require the same care as foods that have not been frozen.

Meat, Poultry, Fish

Meat, including ground meat and poultry, that has any off-odor or off-color should not be refrozen

*Extension foods and nutrition specialist, and Extension family resource management specialist, The Texas A&M University System.

and should not be eaten. The appearance of red meats is changed less than that of other foods.

Shellfish, Vegetables, Cooked Foods

Bacteria multiply rapidly in shellfish, vegetables and cooked foods. Spoilage often cannot be detected by odor. Do not refreeze any of these foods when they have completely thawed. If ice crystals are still in the food, refreeze immediately. Even partial thawing and refreezing reduces the eating quality of these foods. If the condition is questionable, dispose of the thawed foods.

Ice Cream

Thawed ice cream should not be refrozen.

Fruits

Fruits usually ferment when they start to spoil. A little fermentation will not make fruits dangerous to eat, but it may spoil their flavor. You can refreeze thawed fruits if they still taste and smell good. Or you can use them in cooking and baking or for making jams, jellies and prepared foods.

EMERGENCY CARE

Generally, a fully loaded, non-functioning freezer will stay cold enough to keep foods frozen for two days if not opened. In a freezer with less than half a load, food will remain frozen for about one day.

If power fails or the freezer stops due to mechanical failure, keep the freezer closed except when adding dry ice. If normal operation cannot be resumed before the foods start to thaw, use dry ice or move foods to a locker plant.

Dry Ice. If dry ice is placed in the freezer soon after the power is off, 25 pounds should keep the temperature below freezing for 2 or 3 days in a 10-cubic-foot cabinet with half a load; 3 to 4 days in a loaded cabinet.

Place the dry ice on cardboard or small boards on top of packages and do not open freezer again except to put in more dry ice or to remove it when normal operation is resumed.

Locker Plant. If it is necessary to move food to a locker plant, use insulated boxes, blankets or thick layers of paper to prevent thawing. Food which has been moved to the locker plant should be chilled to 0° F. before moving again after your food freezer is operating normally.

Refreeze Food Quickly

Clean your freezer before refilling. Freeze thawed foods quickly. Use refrozen foods as soon as possible.

To refreeze food at home, turn the adjustable temperature control, if your freezer has one, to its coldest position. When the current comes on again, the freezer will run continuously and food will refreeze quicker. Place the warmer packages against the refrigerated surface if possible, but place them so air will circulate around them.

After the food is well frozen, turn the temperature control to its usual setting. If the freezer is too full, move some of the colder packages to the refrigerator, and return them gradually to the freezer.

WHEN THE ODOR REMAINS

If the food spoils in the freezer, stubborn odors may result. Wash the interior surface of the freezer with soda water, using 1 teaspoon baking soda to a quart of warm water. If the odor persists try vinegar, using 1 cup vinegar to a gallon water.

If neither of these suggestions work, don't give up. Try using an electric fan for several hours to circulate air inside the freezer. Place a pan of activated charcoal into the freezer overnight to absorb odors. Then try another washing of the interior with soda water.

If traces of the odor still remain, this is not likely to affect the frozen foods which are securely wrapped in the freezer. If the odor is strong, sometimes leaving charcoal in the freezer for a long time will help.

References: H&GB 162 *Keeping Food Safe* (USDA)
L-321 *What to Do When Your Freezer Stops* (USDA)

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Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, The Texas A&M University System and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914.

10M-5-77, Revision

F&N 6-4