When the Fridge Fails: Food Safety Prep Checklist

For households and small food businesses after the 2026 refrigeration cyberattacks | KemeticMind.com | November 9, 2026

Before anything goes wrong (home)

- ☐ Put an appliance thermometer in both the fridge and the freezer, and check them (Ready.gov; UK Food Standards Agency).
- ☐ Keep enough nonperishable food and water on hand (Ready.gov).
- ☐ Have coolers and a plan for ice (Ready.gov).
- ☐ Ask your doctor or pharmacist how long your refrigerated medicines can be kept at higher temperatures (Ready.gov).
- ☐ Smart fridge or other connected appliance? Change the default password and install updates when they come out (UK NCSC).

If your fridge or freezer stops cooling

- ☐ Keep the doors closed as much as possible (Ready.gov; UK FSA).
- ☐ A fridge stays cold for about 4 hours. A full freezer holds about 48 hours, or about 24 hours if half full (Ready.gov; UK FSA).
- ☐ U.S. rule: throw out food if the temperature is 40°F or higher (Ready.gov).
- ☐ UK rule in a power cut: below 8°C is acceptable. At 8°C or above, chilled food must be eaten or thrown out within 4 hours (UK FSA).
- ☐ Eat in this order: food that needs refrigeration, defrosted frozen food that needs no cooking, room-temperature perishables, then canned, bottled and dried food (UK FSA).
- ☐ If it is colder than 8°C outside, food can go outside in a sealed box, out of the sun and away from animals (UK FSA).
- ☐ Take extra care with food for young children, pregnant women, older people and anyone with a health condition (UK FSA).

Cooking without power

- ☐ Use generators, camp stoves and charcoal grills outdoors only, at least 20 feet from windows (Ready.gov).
- ☐ Never heat your home with a gas stovetop or oven. Install battery-backed carbon monoxide detectors (Ready.gov).

Small food businesses, churches and pantries with commercial cold storage

- [ ] Take refrigeration controllers off the public internet. If remote access is needed, put it behind an updated firewall (CISA/FBI fact sheet).
- [ ] Change default passwords, use strong passwords, and turn on multifactor authentication where possible (CISA/FBI).
- [ ] Update controller firmware, and replace controllers the manufacturer no longer supports (CISA/FBI).
- [ ] Set safe temperature limits on the equipment and turn on alerts for anything outside them (CISA/FBI).
- [ ] Turn on logging and check it for changes nobody on your staff made (CISA/FBI).
- [ ] Report suspicious activity: in the U.S., to the FBI at ic3.gov; in the UK, to the NCSC; in the EU, to your national CSIRT.

Sources: Ready.gov, Power Outages (FEMA); UK Food Standards Agency, Food safety in a power cut: advice for consumers (2023); UK National Cyber Security Centre, Smart devices: using them safely in your home; CISA, FBI, HHS, USDA and DOT, US Government Partners Urge Hardening Industrial Refrigeration and Cold Chain Monitoring Systems (November 2026); ENISA and European Commission joint statement (November 4, 2026). This checklist summarizes their guidance. Follow your local health authority's advice when it differs.