

Cooking When the Power Goes Off

*Extension Family and Consumer Science Specialists
The Texas A&M University System*

After a storm has knocked out electricity or gas lines, cooking meals can be a problem and even hazardous if you do not follow a few basic rules.

Charcoal or gas grills: The most obvious alternative sources of heat for cooking are grills. **Never use them indoors.** In doing so, you risk both asphyxiation from carbon monoxide and starting a fire that could destroy your home.

Camp stoves: Likewise, camp stoves that use gasoline or solid fuel should always be used outdoors. If you have access to an electrical generator, you can use it to power small electrical appliances to prepare meals.

Fireplaces and wood stoves: Wood can be used for cooking in many situations. You can cook in a fireplace if the chimney is sound. Don't start a fire in a fireplace that has a broken chimney. Be sure the damper is open. If you're cooking on a wood stove, make sure the stovepipe has not been damaged.

Outdoors: If you must build a fire outside, build it away from buildings—never in a carport. Sparks can easily get into the ceiling and start a house fire.

- ◆ Make sure any fire is contained well. A good precaution is to place stones or a metal drum around the fire bed.
- ◆ A charcoal grill is a good place in which to build a wood fire. Never use gasoline to get a wood or charcoal fire started.
- ◆ Be sure to put out any fire when you are through with it.

This information was excerpted and adapted from *Food Safety in Hurricanes and Floods*, by P. H. Schmutz, HGIC Information Specialist, and E. H. Hoyle, Extension Food Safety Specialist, Clemson University.

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