

Cooperative Extension

Help! My Power Went Out. Is My Food Safe?



Daryl L. Minch, M.Ed., CFCS, Family and Community Health Sciences Educator, Somerset County

Power failures and appliance doors left open or breakdowns cause a refrigerator or freezer to stop working. When this occurs, you need to decide if the food is safe.

Health and Safety First

Staying healthy is most important. The cost of a doctor or hospital visit from eating spoiled food will be more than the cost of the food. Young children, older adults and people with serious illnesses or weakened immune systems are more at risk for foodborne illness. They may get sick sooner, have more serious symptoms or die. Remember a food may look, smell, and taste good, but can still make you sick. Cooking will not always make food safe. The golden food safety rule is *“when in doubt, throw it out”*. *Never taste the food!*



Keep a thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer.

- Freezer should be 0° F or below.
 - Refrigerator should be at or below 40° F.
- Higher temperatures will allow food to thaw or spoil.



How much time passed since the power or appliance failed?

- How long was the power off? If you don't know, give it your best guess.
- Refrigerated food should be above 40° F for no more than 2 hours to prevent food spoilage.
- A full refrigerator (door closed) will stay cold for about 4 hours.
- A full freezer (door closed) will hold its temperature for about 2 days, a half-full freezer about 1 day. A full stand-alone freezer may stay cold longer.

What to Do When the Power Goes Off

- Keep the refrigerator or freezer doors closed. Open only as necessary.
- Write down the time when the power went off and when it went back on.
- These foods will be safe without refrigeration. (See fact sheet)
 - Uncut, fresh fruit and vegetables such as apples, oranges, carrots, peppers, and broccoli. However, cut produce must be kept cold for safety.
 - Breads, muffins and other baked goods
 - Grated parmesan cheese
 - Jelly, taco sauce, ketchup, mustard, barbeque sauce, and peanut butter
 - Butter or margarine

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Emotional Balance after a Disaster

Marilou Rochford, MA, CFLE., Family & Community Health Sciences Educator, Cape May County



We join the rest of the country in mourning the tragic events at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Many will be grieving for a very long time. This horrendous tragedy quickly followed Hurricane Sandy which left behind serious loss and devastation to New Jersey. It's hard to know what to say to one another and to our children when tragedy of any kind strikes whether it is a natural disaster, shooting, terrorism or other horrific event. As steps are taken to restore physical items like buildings and possessions, victims struggle to put their lives back together. They need to take time to restore their sense of emotional balance and actively deal with their stress too.



Stress often brings feelings of helplessness and anxiety. Other stress-related symptoms include exhaustion, lack of concentration, loss of appetite, anger, nightmares, increased use of drugs or alcohol, depression and hyperactivity. Although common, these are serious problems that can occur after a disaster and they need attention. Reactions to stress can be so severe that a person develops Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a psychological condition that can result from experiencing, witnessing or participating in an overwhelmingly traumatic event. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, about 1 in 30 adults in the U.S. suffer from PTSD in a given year. After a disaster it's important to pay attention to your behavior and that of your loved ones. Seek counseling assistance and support from local mental health professionals if stress symptoms feel overwhelming or worsen..

One of the first things people can do for themselves and one another is pull together as a community. In emergency situations it is critical to have a supportive network of family, friends and neighbors. Try these ways to lessen symptoms of emotional distress:

- Ask for help.
- Reach out to help others.
- Eat healthy food when it is available.
- Rest when you feel tired or exhausted.
- Be physically active. Walking can sometimes help to ease the stress.
- Talk about your feelings.
- Accept help from others.
- Participate in spiritual activity.
- Listen to others.
- Share common experiences.
- Think about what's important in the big picture and set your priorities.
- Use physical touch, if appropriate – hugs, hold a hand, sit close when talking.
- Reassure one another especially children. Remind them that they are not responsible for the problems the family is facing.



Reactions to stress caused by disaster may last for some time. Recovery is a gradual process. Be patient with yourself. Each small step is a step toward recovery. Ongoing support for families and friends is essential as families and communities work to pull their lives back together.

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Helping Children Recover from Disasters

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We can't shield our children from hearing about natural disasters, school shootings, terrorism and other tragedies. The emotional impact of a disaster on children can be tremendous. What can we do when a disaster fills the airwaves and conversations? Children look to parents and other adults for help. The way adults react to an emergency gives children a pattern to follow. If adults react with alarm and fear, children will likely be more upset as they sense the tension around them. A child's age also affects their response to a catastrophe. Preschoolers might become confused and show regressive behavior like thumb sucking or bed wetting. They may cling to their mothers and fathers. Elementary school age children may not want to go to school. They may also regress and become fearful or cry and whine. Some children may become withdrawn, not wanting to talk about the experience. Adolescents may have emotional outbursts or conflicts with parents. Parents should be alert to behavior changes. Some children may not show signs of being upset for weeks or months later. Children of all ages can benefit from talking/listening, physical touch such as hugging and keeping up the daily routine. Contact a local mental health agency for professional help for family members whose stress symptoms increase or do not get better over time.



One of the challenges for parents is that they often must deal with their children's reactions and fears when they have not had time to deal with their own reactions. Parents should take care of themselves first so they can take care of their children. Parents need to reassure children that most of these events are rare occurrences and that they love them and will protect them.

According to the American Red Cross, following a disaster children are most afraid that

- The event will happen again.
- Someone will be injured or killed.
- They will be separated from their family.
- They will be left alone.



Additional steps parents can take to help children cope include:

- Get down to the child's eye level and talk to them. Provide simple, accurate information. In the event of a hurricane, for example, "There is a very bad storm and we need to go to Aunt Lucy's house where we will be safe".
- Encourage your child to talk. Listen to your child and hear what she or he says.
- Acknowledge their feelings. For example, "It sounds like you are afraid that ..." Don't say things like "You are a big boy now and shouldn't be scared."
- Allow children time to cry or be sad. Don't expect them to be "tough."
- Offer reassurance by saying, "We are together. We will take care of you."
- Talk about your own feelings. Be honest. "I felt afraid too, but we are together and we care about one another."
- Spend extra time with your child at bedtime. Leave a night-light on if that makes the child feel more secure. Stay with your child until they fall asleep.
- Allow the child to mourn and grieve, especially if a young child lost a meaningful object like a toy or blanket. For a teen, the loss of photos, special certificates, awards, computer files or irreplaceable memorabilia provoke feelings of sadness and anger. They too will need a chance to grieve their losses.
- Maintain or restart normal routines, if possible. The routines of meals, bedtime, school and extra-curricular activities can bring stability and comfort.

When children suffer from disasters or violence, early intervention is critical. Parents, other adults and professionals need to provide comfort, stability, and support. For more information contact **Mental Health America 1-800-969-NMHA**. Contact a local mental health professional in a local hospital or through county human services for assistance. Health care providers can offer guidance and referrals.



Mushrooms: A Veggie with Amazing Health Benefits

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Mushrooms are one of those foods that people seem to love or dislike. Either way, there are many types of mushrooms, many health benefits, and many ways to prepare them.

Mushrooms come in a variety of shapes and sizes. One of the things that makes mushrooms an attractive addition to a healthy diet is their low-carbohydrate count. According to the USDA's Choose MyPlate key recommendations, a healthy diet includes eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, consuming less than 300mg per day of cholesterol and to replace higher levels of saturated fat. Because mushrooms are comparable to meat, relative to taste and texture, substituting mushrooms for ½ of the meat content in a recipe is one of the ways we can reduce our fat intake and increase our vegetable consumption in a meal. Mushrooms are a low fat, low calorie food, with a one cup serving providing only 20 calories. They contain fiber in the form of chitin, an insoluble dietary fiber.



Differing amounts of vitamins and minerals are found in mushrooms dependent on the type of mushroom. In general, they are good to excellent sources of selenium, copper, riboflavin, niacin and pantothenic acid and contain a fairly significant amount of potassium (550mg/cup cooked). They are the only fresh vegetable to contain vitamin D and provide 4% of the Daily Value of vitamin D in a serving of 4-5 mushrooms. This is important because it has been found that many people in the US have a vitamin D deficiency.

The possible health benefits of mushrooms appear to be numerous. Mushrooms have been researched in many areas of health and disease prevention. To date, there have been many in vitro studies – not in humans – looking at different varieties of mushrooms and their role in immunity, cancer prevention and treatment. Other research areas include their potential role in lowering cholesterol and preventing heart disease along with the possibility for glucose control in diabetes. At this time, there is insufficient evidence to draw definite conclusions about the health benefits of mushrooms. More well-designed, long-term consumption studies need to be conducted to determine the disease prevention benefits of mushrooms.

Adding fresh mushrooms to everyday dishes can provide an extra serving of vegetables for that day. Use a combination of mushrooms and meat in recipes to add volume to meals and extend portions. Lighten up family favorites like burgers, meatballs, pasta sauce and tacos by replacing a portion of the ground meat with mushrooms. Diced mushrooms look similar and blend well with meat, so dishes can be made healthier without losing taste or satisfying texture. Mushrooms are also an ideal accompaniment to salads, pastas, stir-fry and omelets; and a flavor-enhancing topper for meats, poultry and fish. Here are some suggestions from www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org on how to add mushrooms to a meat dish to reduce the calorie and fat content of the dish. Try these tips:

1. Finely chop mushrooms so they are a similar consistency to meat.
2. Combine mushrooms and meat together
3. Complete the recipe as intended (for a meatier dish use a ratio of 50% mushrooms/50% meat; for fewer calories and a richer flavor use a ratio of 80% mushrooms and 20% meat) Remember, fresh mushrooms add moisture to a dish. The 50/50 or 80/20 mushroom to meat ratio will not work in all standard recipes without experimenting with binders or cooking the mushrooms first.

Mushrooms are a wonderful vegetable that can be served in a variety of ways. Try no salt added canned mushrooms which are a quick & low cost alternative. As we work to create healthy meals with limited time, adding them to extend or replace our meat sources is just one way to reduce the fat content in our meals while adding vegetables to meet the USDA recommendations of consuming 2.5 cups of vegetables each day on a 2,000 calorie food plan.



The recipe on page 5 was adapted and reprinted with permission from 1,000 Low-Calorie Recipes by Jackie Newgent, RD (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012). <http://jackienewgent.com/cookbooks/1000-low-calorie-recipes/>

Swedish Meatballs

Yield: 12 servings Serving Size: 3-- 1-oz meatballs

Ingredients:

- 2 slices fresh whole-wheat bread, torn or chopped into tiny bite-size pieces
- 1/4 cup plain almond milk or light soy milk
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 1/2 teaspoons canola or vegetable oil
- 2/3 cup finely chopped white or red onion
- 1 1/2 cups finely chopped fresh shiitake mushroom caps or cremini (baby bella) mushrooms
- 2 teaspoons white wine vinegar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sea salt, or to taste
- 1 pound ground turkey (about 94% lean)
- 8 ounces lean ground beef
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 3/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/4 cup whole wheat, oat or soy flour
- 3 cups low-sodium beef or chicken broth
- 1/4 cup fat-free evaporated milk
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly grated or ground nutmeg, or to taste

Directions:

1. Add the bread to a small mixing bowl. Drizzle with the almond milk and toss to combine. Set aside.
2. Melt 1 tablespoon of the butter with 1 teaspoon of the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the onion, mushrooms, vinegar, and 1/4 teaspoon of the salt and sauté until the onion is softened, about 8 minutes. Remove from heat, transfer to a platter, and let cool for 15 to 30 minutes.
3. Add the bread mixture, turkey, egg, pepper, allspice, onion mixture, and 3/4 teaspoon of salt to a large mixing bowl. Thoroughly combine by hand.
4. Form the mixture into 36 meatballs, about 1 rounded tablespoon (1 ounce) each.
5. Preheat the oven to 300°F.
6. Heat 1 1/2 teaspoons (1/2 tablespoon) of the butter and 3/4 teaspoon of the oil in the skillet over medium heat. Add half of the meatballs and sauté until just brown on all sides, about 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer the meatballs using tongs or a slotted spoon to a 9 by 13-inch ovenproof dish. Repeat with the remaining butter, oil, and meatballs.
7. Bake the meatballs until fully cooked, about 25 minutes.
8. Meanwhile, add the flour to the remaining bits and fat in the meatball skillet and cook over medium heat stirring continuously for about 1 minute. Whisk in the broth, about 1/4 cup at a time, until fully incorporated. Increase the heat to medium-high and stir frequently until the sauce begins to thicken, about 12 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium, add the evaporated milk, nutmeg, and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, and continue to cook while stirring until the gravy is desired thickened consistency, about 5 minutes.
9. Remove the meatballs from the oven. Pour the gravy over the meatballs. Sprinkle with additional nutmeg or allspice, if desired, and serve.

Tip: Use 2 1/2 cups of mushrooms and no ground beef for greater calorie savings.

Nutrition Facts

Per serving: 140 calories, 7g total fat, 2.5g saturated fat, 0g trans-fat, 50mg cholesterol, 380mg sodium, 6g total carbohydrate, 1g dietary fiber, 2g sugars, 14g protein

Are Raw Sprouts Safe To Eat?

What You Should Know...

www.foodsafety.gov.

Do sprouts carry a risk of illness?

Like any fresh produce that is consumed raw or lightly cooked, sprouts carry a risk of foodborne illness. Unlike other fresh produce, seeds and beans need warm and humid conditions to sprout and grow. These conditions are also ideal for the growth of bacteria, including Salmonella, Listeria, and E. coli.

Have sprouts been associated with outbreaks of foodborne illness?

Since 1996, there have been at least 30 reported outbreaks of foodborne illness associated with different types of raw and lightly cooked sprouts. Most of these outbreaks were caused by Salmonella and E. coli.

What is the source of the bacteria?

In outbreaks associated with sprouts, the seed is typically the source of the bacteria. There are a number of approved techniques to kill harmful bacteria that may be present on seeds and even tests for seeds during sprouting. But, no treatment is guaranteed to eliminate all harmful bacteria.

Are homegrown sprouts safer?

Not necessarily. If just a few harmful bacteria are present in or on the seed, the bacteria can grow to high levels during sprouting, even under sanitary conditions at home.

What can industry do to enhance the safety of sprouts?

In 1999, the FDA provided the sprout industry with guidance on reducing the risk of contamination of sprouts by harmful bacteria.

The FDA and other Federal and State agencies continue to work with industry on detecting and reducing contamination and keeping contaminated sprouts out of the marketplace.



What can consumers do to reduce the risk of illness?

- Children, the elderly, pregnant women, and persons with weakened immune systems should avoid eating raw sprouts of any kind (including alfalfa, clover, radish, and mung bean sprouts).
- Cook sprouts thoroughly to reduce the risk of illness. Cooking kills the harmful bacteria.
- Request that raw sprouts not be added to your food. If you purchase a sandwich or salad at a restaurant or delicatessen, check to make sure that raw sprouts have not been added.
- Canned sprouts (mung beans) are safe to eat cold or hot.

It's Easy to Eat Green!

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Have you eaten green today? If not, it's time to check out leafy green vegetables. These essential members of the vegetable food group are packed with vitamins and minerals. They also contain phytonutrients, which help your body fight disease. Here in New Jersey, there are many options to choose from when looking for a leafy green vegetable. Look for some of these healthy choices to share with the family: arugula, green leaf lettuce, romaine lettuce and spinach are all considered salad greens while beet leaves, collards, dandelion greens, kale, kohlrabi leaves and Swiss chard are cooking greens.

Purchasing and storage:

Look for crisp leaves and a bright green color when purchasing fresh greens. Avoid limp, spotted, or brown leaves. Store the leafy greens in cool conditions such as the refrigerator crisper. Many leafy greens deteriorate faster when exposed to fruit that emits ethylene gas such as apples, pears, tropical fruits, bananas, and avocado. Try to store the greens away from these fruits. These vegetables will keep for a few days to two weeks. Wash fresh greens just prior to use. Bagged greens labeled "pre-washed" do not need to be washed at home. Frozen greens are another fast alternative. Choose plain frozen greens rather than those covered in high fat, high sodium sauces. Select "no salt added" canned greens.

Powerhouse cooking greens:

Kale:

There are many varieties of this cool season vegetable that are typically grown in the spring or fall. Kale is a great source of fiber and vitamins A, C and K, which are necessary for strong and healthy kids and adults. Store kale in a closed plastic bag or container & keep very cold. Kale tastes best cooked so try adding it to soups, stir-fries, mashed potatoes (cook first) or omelets or bake them. Try the kale chip recipe to make an afternoon snack kids will love.

Spinach:

This leafy green comes in two varieties: curly leaf and flat leaf. Both can be cooked or eaten raw. Baby spinach is a great choice for making a salad. Store spinach in its original bag if it comes in one or place spinach in a plastic bag. Use within 3 to 4 days. Spinach has Vitamins A, C, folate, potassium and iron. Iron in spinach is about 50% bioavailable. To increase the bioavailability of iron, consume spinach with a source of Vitamin C. Spinach is prepared by washing, removing any tough stems and cooking the spinach or adding raw to a salad. Spinach can be sautéed with some garlic and onions, baked into a traditional dish like lasagna or even added to a tasty sandwich!

Swiss chard:

This earthy-tasting green has thick stalks that come in many colors: red, white and rainbow. Both the leaves and tender stalks may be eaten. Swiss chard is an excellent source of Vitamins A, C and K, as well as magnesium, potassium, iron and dietary fiber. Store chard in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator and use within 2 to 3 days. To prepare this vegetable, simply rinse leaves and stems in cold water and boil, steam or roast.

Enjoy your delicious greens with other vegetables, lean protein and a whole grain for a healthy meal. With so many varieties and ways to prepare leafy greens, the possibilities are endless! Why not add some leafy greens to your family dinner today?



Ingredients:

- 1 bunch of kale
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- A teaspoon of favorite seasoning (Ex. Parmesan cheese, garlic powder, no or low salt seasoning mix or Cinnamon Sugar)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 325° F
2. Coat two 9 x 13 baking sheets with cooking oil spray or rub tray lightly with oil.
3. Wash and dry kale. Separate leaves from the stalk and tear into bite size pieces and place in bowl.
4. Pour olive oil into bowl with kale leaves and toss to coat using your fingers.
5. Place kale leaves on baking sheets in single layer and sprinkle with seasoning of choice.
6. Bake for 20 minutes or until the edges of the kale leaves are slightly brown.
7. Cool & serve immediately.

Serves: About 16 (1 cup of kale chips each)

Per Serving: 44 calories, 2g total fat, 7g carbohydrates, 2g protein, 3g dietary fiber, 30 mg sodium, 126% Vitamin A, 71% Vitamin C, 1171% Vitamin K



Vacationing on a Shoestring

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When the days get longer and the weather gets warmer, many people want to take a break from their normal routine. Whether you're planning a week-long vacation or long weekend, a fun getaway doesn't have to put you in the poorhouse. It is possible to take a vacation even during tough economic times. Below are some tips to save money on your future summer vacations:

- **Start your planning with vacation goals and a budget.** What would you like to do during your vacation? Relax on a beach or "see the sights" somewhere? The destination, planned activities, and length of a vacation will greatly affect the cost. Try using the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Financial Goal-Setting Worksheet to calculate what you need to save each month before your vacation: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/money/pdfs/goalsettingworksheet.pdf>.
- **To reduce the cost of vacation meals on road trips, plan to eat only one meal out a day, if possible.** Pack foods such as granola bars, canned or dried fruits, and canned juices for breakfast, or select hotels that include a free continental breakfast. Many resorts and hotels offer deals (e.g., free breakfast, free Internet access, amusement park discounts, etc.) to attract visitors, especially in tough economic times.
- **Another alternative is to pack some food in a cooler** (or buy it when you arrive at your destination), and stay at hotels with a refrigerator and/or microwave oven in the room. The availability of a refrigerator and microwave lets you bring home "doggie bags" from a restaurant or order take-out food rather than a sit-down meal. Pack a few re-sealable food storage bags or plastic containers in your luggage.
- **To keep food and beverages cold, freeze water in a cleaned one quart milk jug.** The frozen water will thaw slower than ice cubes, take up less space in a cooler, and keep things dry.
- **On days that you must eat a meal out, consider dining out at lunchtime rather than dinner as the cost is often less.** Beverages can add to the cost, so consider sticking with complimentary water. Consider sharing an entree, but check first to see if there is an additional charge for shared meals. Also, rather than order individual desserts at a restaurant, you may want to decide together on a shared dessert item such as a pie you can pick up at the supermarket to enjoy afterward.
- **Additionally, some people save money by sharing vacation spots and expenses** (including food) with family and/or friends, such as renting a multi-room condo or cottage and sharing the cost.
- **In some areas, entertainment books or tourist guidebooks** are chock full of coupons to save money on food such as buy-one/get-one-free meals or \$5 off a meal for two.
- **Look for deals on airfare through Web sites** such as www.kayak.com or from the "last minute deals" links on airline Web sites. Cheaper modes of travel may be to drive your own car or a rental car or take a train or bus if your destination is fairly close. Amtrak offers discounts on train fare to AAA members who book their trips in advance. College students may qualify for discounted airfares on Web sites like www.studentuniverse.com.
- **If money is tight, become a "local tourist."** Visit your home county and/or state historical sites and learn about your heritage. Plan "daycations" (i.e., inexpensive one-day trips) and "staycations" (i.e., vacations at or near home) in lieu of vacation travel to distant areas. Focus on doing fun things together as a family or group of friends, no matter where the location.
- **Shop around each time you take a vacation.** Compare at least 3 competing product and service providers; e.g., car rental companies. Remember that, just because one company had the best deals once, doesn't mean that they always will.
- **Make friends with "pet-friendly" neighbors.** Trading pet-sitting services will eliminate the cost of kenneling a pet from your vacation budget.



It is possible to take a vacation on a shoestring budget. With a few months head start now to plan and save, you'll be ready for an affordable and fun break from your normal routine when warmer weather arrives.

Help! My Power Went Out. Is My Food Safe? - continued from page 1

- Keep it cold
 - Group foods together.
 - A cooler is easier to keep cold than the refrigerator. Replace ice as needed.
 - A freezer will stay cold longer with additional ice. If the freezer is not full, stack packages together and fill empty space with ice. Put trays under food and ice to catch drips.
 - Find a friend with extra refrigerator or freezer space.
 - Locate ice. The more the better. Block ice lasts longer.
 - Locate dry ice and follow directions on safe handling.



Refrigerator food check when power is back.

- As soon as the power comes on, check the temperature.
- Check temperature of food with an instant read thermometer. If you do not have a thermometer, do foods feel cold to the touch?
- Cold foods (40° F or less) are safe. Discard food over 40° F or if warm.
- Use the fact sheet listed below for what foods to keep and those to discard.



Freezer food check when power is back.

- As soon as the power comes on, check the temperature.
- Inspect freezer foods immediately after the power goes back on. If you wait the food will get cold or freeze again and you will not be able to tell if it thawed.
- Food that is partially frozen or contains ice crystals may be refrozen or used.
- Food that is cold (40° F or less) may be refrozen or used.
- Discard food that is warm or melted.
- Refreeze or use baked goods - bread, cookies, cake.
- Use the fact sheet listed below for what foods to keep and discard.
- Clean the refrigerator and freezer prior to reloading, especially if food dripped.



Discard Unsafe Food

Unsafe food can make people and animals sick. Do not taste questionable food. Discard in a closed garbage container.

Fact sheet with food storage charts:

Help! My Refrigerator or Freezer Stopped Working. Is My Food Safe? (FS1178),

<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS1178> or call your RCE County office for a copy.