



Pomperaug District Department of Health

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Food Safety During Power Outages in Food Establishments

Safe Food is Good Business

Checklist

The following are recommendations that apply to food safety during an extended power outage (more than two hours). Appropriate decision making before, during, and immediately after a power outage is necessary to protect consumers from unsafe food and minimize product loss. The Pomperaug District Department of Health expects that all food service establishments will adhere to these recommendations to reduce the establishment's liability and to protect the health of its customers. The Pomperaug District Department of Health recommends that food establishments develop a power outage plan before the need arises.

Keep in mind if an imminent health hazard exists the Health District may require that the food establishment immediately stop operating. Imminent health hazards Include: the loss of a potable water supply, an extended power outage, a natural disaster.

Prior to a Forecasted Storm (potential power outage)

- Adjust thermostats in refrigerators and freezers to coldest settings
- Move refrigerated food to a walk-in or reach-in freezer or obtain a refrigerated truck
- Arrange for ice, dry ice or generators.
- Limit or modify food deliveries

During a Power Outage

- Note the time the power outage begins.
 - If the power outage is likely to be **less than 2 hours**, it is permissible to remain open provided that:
 - Refrigerated potentially hazardous foods must be maintained **at or below 41°F**.
 - Frozen foods must be maintained frozen.
 - Hot cooked potentially hazardous food must be maintained at **140°F or above**.
 - Your cooking equipment is operational.
 - You are on public water. If you are on a well, you will not have running water and it is **strongly** recommended that you consider closing.
 - If power outage is due to a storm or some other type of widespread incident where power may be out for **longer than 2 hours**, it is **strongly** recommended that you consider closing and cease preparing food or being open for business.

Extended Power Outage – longer than 2 hours

- Begin taking regular food temperature readings. Check hot foods every hour and cold foods every two hours.
- Discontinue all cooking operations.
- Do not place hot food in refrigerators or freezers, as this will rapidly raise the temperature inside the refrigerator or freezer and may make more food unusable. Use ice or/ice baths to rapidly cool small batches of hot food.
- Discard food products that are in the process of being cooked, but which have not yet reached the final cooking temperature.
- Do not receive any potentially hazardous foods, until power has been restored and

refrigerators and freezers are at proper temperatures.

- You may **not** bring food to a private residence to store in refrigerator.
- It's permissible to bring food to another restaurant if temperature is maintained during transport.

Freezers

- Leave the freezer door closed. A full freezer should keep food safe about two days, -- a half-full freezer, about one day.
- Add bags of ice or dry ice to the freezer if it appears the power will be off for an extended time. You can safely re-freeze thawed foods that still contain ice crystals and are 41°F or less. *Caution: the use of dry ice may result in the unsafe build-up of carbon dioxide.*

Refrigerators

- Food in refrigerators should be safe as long as the power is out no more than about four hours. When power is restored, you must take temperatures of food.
- Leave the door closed; every time you open it, cold air escapes, causing the foods inside to reach unsafe temperatures.
- Discard any potentially hazardous food that has been above 41°F for four hours or more or if the temperature exceeds 45°F for any length of time, or if it has an unusual color, odor, or texture.

What to Discard - *When in doubt, throw it out!*

The following foods in refrigerators and freezers should be discarded **if kept over four hours at above 41°F, or if the temperature exceeds 45°F for any length of time.**

- Document any food discarded for insurance purposes.
- Meat, poultry, fish, eggs and egg substitutes - raw or cooked
- Milk, cream, yogurt, butter, and cheese
- Casseroles, stews or soups
- Lunch meats and hot dogs
- Creamy-based foods made on-site
- Custard, chiffon, pumpkin or cheese pies
- Cream-filled pastries
- Cookie dough made with eggs
- Garlic in oil
- Cut melons; cut tomatoes; sprouts; packaged salad greens
- Cooked vegetables
- Cooked rice, pasta, grains, legumes

What Can Be Saved

The following foods may be kept at **room temperature a few days** although food quality may be affected.

- Margarine
- Fresh uncut fruits and vegetables
- Dried fruits and coconut
- Opened jars of vinegar-based salad dressings, jelly, relish, taco sauce, barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup, olives and peanut butter
- Fruit juices
- Fresh herbs and spices
- Fruit pies, breads, rolls, and muffins
- Cakes, except cream cheese frosted or cream-filled
- Flour and nuts

When Power is Restored

Identify and discard potentially hazardous foods that may have been above 41°F or below 140°F for four or more hours or above 45°F for any length of time.

- Check the internal food temperatures using a food thermometer and record the temperature.
- Document any food discarded for insurance purposes.
- Test temperatures of any food being received, especially if power outage affects areas where your suppliers are located.
- When re-opening do not make a lot of food that needs cooling. Cook and serve as much as possible (too many warm food items in refrigerator will affect temperature). Consider using a limited menu for the first day or two.
- Prior to re-opening be sure that all refrigerators are able to maintain food temperatures at <45°F. The air temperature in the refrigerator should be <41°F before you begin to use it again. Plan your deliveries accordingly. Freezers must be cold enough to keep foods frozen.
- Test refrigerator temperatures before using them by putting a cup of water in the refrigerator. Water must be < 45°F.
- If practical, separate packages of food in refrigeration units and freezers to allow for faster re-cooling.

Potential Flooding

- If the well was flooded, it must be tested. If testing shows bacterial contamination, the well must be disinfected and retested before using.
- Interruption of water service or well contamination may serve as a vehicle for contamination to food and equipment. Any equipment that is connected to the water supply must be flushed, cleaned and sanitized before returning to service. Remove and discard any ice in ice making equipment.
- If floodwaters have entered your facility, please contact the Pomperaug Health District for instructions on salvaging food. Basically, any exposed food will need to be discarded. Foods in non-porous containers may be salvageable.
- If floodwaters have entered your facility, you will also need to clean and disinfect floors, walls, and equipment.

The Pomperaug District Department of Health may require an inspection of your establishment prior to re-opening after an extended power outage. If an establishment was ordered closed by the Health District due to non-compliance, an inspection will be required prior to re-opening.

If you need assistance or have any questions you may call the Pomperaug Health District at 203-264-9616