

What Consumers Need to Know

Emergencies can happen. When they do, the best strategy is to already have a plan in place. This includes knowing the proper food and water safety precautions to take if hurricanes — or other flooding/power outages — do occur.

Be Prepared for Emergencies

1. Make sure you have appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer.
 - Check to ensure that the freezer temperature is at or below 0 °F and the refrigerator is at or below 40 °F.
 - In case of a power outage, the appliance thermometers will indicate the temperatures in the refrigerator and freezer to help you determine if the food is safe.
2. Freeze containers of water for ice to help keep food cold in the freezer, refrigerator, or coolers in case the power goes out. If your normal water supply is contaminated or unavailable, the melting ice will also supply drinking water.
3. Freeze refrigerated items such as leftovers, milk, and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need immediately. This helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.
4. Group food together in the freezer. This helps the food stay cold longer.
5. Have coolers on hand to keep refrigerated food cold if the power will be out for more than 4 hours.
6. Purchase or make ice cubes in advance and store in the freezer for use in the refrigerator or in a cooler. Freeze gel packs ahead of time for use in coolers.
7. Check out local sources to know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased, just in case.
8. Store food on shelves that will be safely out of the way of contaminated water in case of flooding.
9. Make sure to have a supply of bottled water stored where it will be as safe as possible from flooding.

Excerpt from FoodFacts, FDA, December 2007

Rappahannock Area Health District

Guidance for Food Establishments During a Power Outage

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific affected food operations during an extended interruption of electrical service.

Affected Operations

Refrigeration: Refrigeration equipment inoperable.

Alternative Procedures

- Note the time the power outage begins.

And

- Monitor and record food temperatures every 2 hours– document that you have acted responsibly. (See chart in Recovery Guidance)
- Keep refrigeration equipment doors closed.
- Pack potentially hazardous food in commercially made ice or dry ice (use precautions for using dry ice by using insulated gloves and venting the area before entering).
- Relocate product in cases to walk-in boxes or freezers if safe temperatures cannot be maintained.
- Do not put hot food into refrigeration equipment.

Ventilation: No mechanical ventilation provided to remove cooking smoke, steam, grease laden air, etc.

Alternative Procedures

- Discontinue all cooking operations.

Lighting: Lack of artificial illumination for personal safety, food preparation, food handling, cleaning equipment/utensils, cleaning the premises.

Alternative Procedures

- Limit operation to daylight hours. Restrict operations to those that can be safely conducted in available natural light.
- Provide lighting using other power sources (i.e. battery operated lantern, flashlight, etc. if fire codes allow). Limit operation to those procedures that can be safely conducted using alternative lighting.

Cooking Equipment: Cooking equipment is no longer functional

Alternative Procedures

- Evaluate time and temperature to determine if foods should be discarded
- Discard raw animal/potentially hazardous foods that were in the cooking or re-heating process but did not reach a safe final temperature.

And

- Discontinue cooking operations.

Hot Food Holding: Equipment for holding potentially hazardous food hot is no longer operational

Alternative Procedures

- Note the time the power outage begins.

And

- Discard all potentially hazardous food after 4 hours from being removed from temperature control (below 135° F)

Dishwashing Equipment: Equipment for cleaning and sanitizing utensils and tableware is no longer operational.

Alternative Procedures

- Use the three compartment sink if hot water is still available
- Use single service tableware

And

- Discontinue operations that generate soiled utensils/tableware.

Water: The well serving the establishment no longer produces water.

Alternative Procedures

- Discontinue all operations.

Sewage Disposal: Sewage ejector pump(s), no longer function

Alternative Procedures

- Discontinue all operations.

Electric Hot Water Heater: No hot water

Alternative Procedures

- Heat water on a gas cooking appliance.