

Rappahannock Area Health District

Guidance for Food Establishments Recovery following Power Outage

The following involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a normal safe operation.

A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory authority.

Refrigerated Food Safety Guide

When power is restored, the following table should be used as a guide for handling potentially hazardous food (PHF / TCS) stored in refrigeration units that may have lost power. When in doubt, throw it out!

COLD FOODS INTERNAL TEMPERATURE GUIDANCE			
Time	42° - 45° F	46° - 50° F	51° F or above
0-2 hrs	PHF (TCS) can be sold	Immediately cool PHF (TCS) foods to 41°F or below within 2 hours	PHF (TCS) foods cannot be sold. DESTROY the food.*
2-3 hrs	PHF (TCS) can be sold but must be cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours	Immediately cool PHF (TCS) to 41°F or below within 1 hour	
4 hrs	Immediately cool PHF (TCS) to 41°F or below within 1 hour	PHF (TCS) foods cannot be sold. DESTROY the food.*	
5+ hrs	PHF (TCS) foods cannot be sold. DESTROY the food.*		

* Regulatory authority may determine disposition of food depending on commodity or item and the ability to cool it down to 41°F or below within 2 hours for some foods such as harder cheeses, butters, margarines, etc with low a_w and/or foods with lower pH provided refrigeration was restored within 4 hours and documentation is available. The time-temperature requirements for cooling foods are more stringent than FDA Food Code.

If the location was vacated during the power outage, upon return the storage equipment may be fully functioning and the food may be at proper temperature. If the duration of the power outage and the highest temperature of the food cannot be verified then all potentially hazardous food must be discarded.

Frozen foods that remain solid or semi-solid can be refrozen if food packages show no evidence of thawing such as weeping, stains, physical depreciation, evaporation, or container damage. If product is somewhat thawed or soft and has not exceeded 41°F on the outside and the inner core is still solid, it can be refrozen or further processed/cooked by food service operators. This product is not recommended for retail sale due to quality deficiencies. As a general rule, a well functioning freezer that remains unopened and is at least half full, can maintain foods below 41F for up to 24 hours.

Key areas to consider for returning to normal operation when power is restored:

- Electricity, potable water, and/or gas services have been fully restored.
- All circuit breakers have been properly re-set as needed.
 - All equipment and facilities are operating properly including: lighting, refrigeration (back to operating temperature of 41° F and below), hot holding, ventilation, water supply, sewage pumps, hot water heaters, toilet facilities, ware washing machines and hand washing facilities.
 - Food contact surfaces, equipment and utensils cleaned and sanitized prior to resuming food-handling operations. This includes ice bins in ice machines where ice has melted during the interruption.
- Flush all water lines, change filters, etc.

Disposal of Food:

Small volumes of food can be denatured (such as with bleach, a detergent or other cleaning product to render it unusable) or alternatively destroyed and placed in an outside refuse bin for removal. To discard large volumes of food, the firm should contact a disposal company for immediate transportation to a licensed landfill.

If you have any additional questions, please contact your local health department.

City of Fredericksburg: 540-899-4796

Stafford County: 540-288-9018

Spotsylvania County: 540-507-7386

Caroline County: 804-633-6237

King George County: 540-775-3111