



## Northeast Tri County Health District Environmental Health Division

### How to Keep Food Safe During A Power Outage A Guide for Food Establishments

When a power outage occurs, prior planning and quick action will help a food establishment keep food safe, minimize product loss, and protect their customers from foodborne illness.

#### **Before there is a power outage:**

- ❖ Consider having an electrical generator available as a back up power supply. The generator will need to be big enough to operate the electrical equipment in your facility. Its installation and use must be coordinated with your power company for safety.
- ❖ Investigate potential sources for a refrigerated truck to be used during a power outage.
- ❖ Have a phone that plugs directly into a phone jack and does not need any additional power.
- ❖ Keep an Emergency Phone List. Phone number you may want to include . . .
  - 911
  - Utility Company
  - Business Owner
  - Business Manager
  - Northeast Tri County Health District
  - Others as needed

#### **When there is a power outage:**

- ❖ Note the time the power outage begins.
- ❖ Discontinue all cooking operations.
- ❖ Throw away foods that are being cooked, but have not reached their final cooking temperature.
- ❖ Do not place hot foods in refrigerators or freezers, as this will rapidly raise the temperature inside the refrigerator or freezer.
- ❖ Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- ❖ Cover any open display refrigerators and freezers, especially vertical display refrigerators.
- ❖ Ice or an ice bath may be used to hold foods or to rapidly cool small batches of food.
- ❖ Keep hot potentially hazardous foods at 135° F or above. Canned chafing dish fuel can be used to maintain food temperatures.

#### **After the power is restored:**

- ❖ Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of all hot and cold potentially hazardous foods.
- ❖ Decide to either keep or throw away potentially hazardous foods.

The charts below can be used to determine if foods are safe or if they must be thrown away.

Cold Foods			
Hours power is out	Food temperature		
	45° F or below	46° F to 50° F	51° F or above
0-2	OK	OK	OK
2-4	OK	OK	X
More than 4	OK	X	X

OK – Food may be sold, as long as it was 41°F or less when the power went out. **Immediately cool food to 41°F or less.**

X – Food may be unsafe and may not be sold.

Hot Foods		
Hours power is out	Food temperature	
	130° F or above	129° F or below
0-2	OK	OK
2-4	OK	X
More than 4	X	X

OK – Food may be sold, as long as it was 135°F or more when the power went out. **Immediately reheat to at least 165°F. After reheating, hold at 135°F or above, or immediately cool to 41°F or below.**

X – Food may be unsafe and may not be sold.

**Disposal of food:**

- ❖ WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!
- ❖ If food must be thrown away, document the type and amount of food and the reason for disposal, so that you can provide the information to your insurance company and local health department.
- ❖ Small amounts of food to be thrown away can be treated with a cleaning product (such as bleach) so that they will not be eaten, and placed in the outside garbage bin.
- ❖ To throw away large amounts of food, contact your garbage disposal company or your local landfill for disposal instructions.
- ❖ If you have questions about the safety of specific foods, contact Northeast Tri County Health District.

Food Program Staff can be reached at the Colville Environmental Health Office.

For additional information contact:

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