



Division of Environmental Health

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**FOOD SAFETY DURING TEMPORARY POWER OUTAGES
 RETAIL FOOD FACILITIES**

In the event of an electrical power outage in Humboldt County, the following guidelines should be followed in order to protect consumers from unsafe food and minimize product loss for retailers.

Foods of concern during outages are classified as potentially hazardous foods (PHF). PHFs are foods that are perishable and can support the growth of bacteria when the foods are held in the temperature danger zone (41°F to 135°F).

WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE IS A POWER OUTAGE

- Note the time when the outage begins.
- Discard food products that are in the process of being cooked but have yet to reach their final cooking temperature.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO KEEP FOODS SAFE DURING POWER OUTAGE

Cold Potentially Hazardous Foods

- Keep fridge and freezer doors closed and avoid unnecessary openings.
- Cover open refrigerated and frozen food cases, especially vertical displays.
- Caution: dry ice may result in an unsafe build-up of CO₂ (carbon dioxide).

Hot Potentially Hazardous Foods

- Use ice and ice baths to rapidly cool small batches of hot foods.
- Do not put hot foods in refrigerator or freezer.
- If possible, maintain hot foods at or above 135°F.

DISCONTINUE FOOD PREPARATION IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS EXIST

- No hot water.
- Inadequate water pressure.
- Inability to properly wash, rinse, and sanitize utensils.
- Lack of sufficient light in food preparation areas.
- Unsafe food temperatures (see tables provided).

WHEN THE POWER IS RESTORED

- Note the time power is restored.
- Identify PHFs that may have been in the temperature danger zone.
- Check internal food temperatures using thermometer.

REFRIGERATED POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS FOODS

Duration of Power Outage	FOOD AT 45°F	FOOD AT 46°F – 50°F	FOOD OVER 50°F
0 – 2 HOURS	PHF can be sold.	Cool PHF at 41°F or below within 1 hour.	PHF MUST BE DISCARDED.
2 – 3 HOURS	PHF can be sold but must be cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours.	Cool PHF to 41°F or below within 1 hour.	PHF MUST BE DISCARDED.
4+ HOURS	Immediately cool PHF to 41°F or below within 1 hour.	PHF cannot be sold.	PHF MUST BE DISCARDED.

POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS FOODS IN HOT HOLDING UNITS

Duration of Power Outage	FOOD BELOW 135°F IN HOT HOLDING UNIT WHEN POWER IS RESTORED
0 – 2 HOURS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May be sold if reheated to 165°F and then held at or above 135°F.• May be sold if rapidly cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours following restoration of power.
2+ HOURS	PHF cannot be sold.

REOPENING

If you voluntarily closed your facility, the following conditions must be verified prior to resuming food preparation and sale of potentially hazardous foods:

- All unsafe potentially hazardous foods have been discarded.
- Electricity and gas services have been restored.
- All equipment and facilities are operating properly (i.e., refrigeration, hot holding, ventilation, etc.).
- Hot potable water available for handwashing and proper dishwashing.

Note: if your facility was closed by the Division of Environmental Health, it must remain closed until you obtain approval to reopen.

DISPOSAL OF FOOD

Potentially hazardous food that has been subject to unsafe temperatures prior to the power outage might not be safe to eat even if the previous tables have been followed.

- If it has been determined that the food must be discarded, document the type and amount of food that is discarded for insurance and regulatory purposes.
- Do not refreeze items that have thawed. If the food is still cold (less than or at 41°F), cook immediately.
- Any spoiled food should be placed into sealed plastic garbage bags and disposed in the dumpster. Remember to make sure that dumpster lids are closed to prevent insect and rodent access.
- To discard large volumes of food, contact your refuse disposal company or your local landfill operator for disposal instructions.
- When in doubt, throw it out.

Remember that food may be unsafe even if it has no odor. Do not trust your sense of smell.