

Food Safety for Operators during a Power Outage

Introduction

A power outage can spoil food and make it unsafe to eat from improper refrigeration and sanitation. Power outages may be short-term (e.g., rotating blackouts) or long-term (e.g., emergency, extreme weather, planned interruption, equipment failure).

It is your responsibility as the food premise owner or operator to ensure that the food you serve is safe. Food preparation is not recommended during a power outage.

Short-term power outage

If you experience a short-term power outage, the following tips will help you safely handle food to reduce the risk of food-borne illness:

Freezer

- Without electrical power, a full upright or chest freezer will keep contents frozen for approximately two days. A freezer that is half-full will keep food frozen for one day.
- Avoid opening and closing the freezer door. Food will last longer when the freezer door is closed.
- Ensure there are accurate thermometers in each freezer in accordance with the *Food Premises Regulation 562*. This will help ensure that the freezer temperature is -18°C (0°F) or lower.

- Foods that have thawed in the freezer may be re-frozen if they still have ice crystals.
- Use a probe thermometer to check internal food temperatures. If possible, add bags of ice to the freezer to help keep the temperature cool for a longer period of time and replenish the ice as needed.
- Throw out perishable foods such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs and leftovers that have been at temperatures above 4°C (40°F) for more than two hours.
- Throw out food items in the freezer that have come into contact with raw meat juices.

Refrigerator

- Without electrical power, the refrigerator will keep foods cool for four hours provided that the door is kept closed as much as possible.
- Ensure there are accurate indicating thermometers in each refrigerator in accordance with the *Food Premises Regulation 562*. This will help ensure that the refrigerator temperature is 4°C (40°F) or lower.
- Throw out perishable foods such as meats, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy items and leftovers that have been at temperatures above 4°C (40°F) for more than two hours.

1-800-361-5653

TTY (for those with hearing disabilities) **1-866-252-9933**



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- Discard food items in the refrigerator that have come into contact with raw meat juices.
- Consider using coolers or ice chests with a supply of ice for food storage.
- When in doubt, throw it out! If you are unsure whether an item is spoiled, be food safe and throw it out.

Hot Holding

- Hot food items on a steam table should be discarded if the temperature is below 60°C (140°F) for more than two hours. Use a probe thermometer to check internal food temperatures.

Drinking water supply from Municipal Water

- There should be no concern if water pressure was maintained in the drinking water system (i.e., pipes and plumbing). If the water pressure was lost, contact the local municipality and/or York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653, TTY 1-866-252-9933.

Drinking water supply from a Private Supply (Well or Lake)

- Immediately call York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653, TTY 1-866-252-9933, during regular business hours or the Community and Health Services on-call Public Health Inspector at 1-888-335-0111 after regular business hours to report the adverse water quality incident (AWQI). Follow any direction given by the Public Health Inspector.
- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, make ice, prepare food or wash your hands.
- If water supply is treated by an Ultraviolet system (UV), ensure it is functioning according to manufacturer's guidelines and flush the drinking water system (i.e., pipes and plumbing) at the furthest tap before using the water.

- If your water is disinfected by chlorination, flush the lines and ensure that the chlorine residual is at a minimum 0.05 mg/L before using.
- All water using devices (e.g., ice machines, coffee machines directly connected to the plumbing, dishwashers etc.) should be drained, flushed and sanitized in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines prior to reuse.

Long-term power outage

A long-term power outage (e.g., greater than two hours) may result in the closure of your food premises by a Public Health Inspector. A lack of electricity in a food premises could result in a possible health hazard. Contact York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653, TTY 1-866-252-9933 if you experience a long-term power outage.

Checklist

If your premise is closed during a long-term power outage, ensure the following items are completed prior to re-opening:

- ✓ All internal temperatures of refrigeration units are 4°C (40°F) or lower and freezers are (-18°C (0°F) or lower.
- ✓ Steam tables/hot holding units are capable of maintaining foods at 60°C (140°F) or higher. Use a probe thermometer to check.
- ✓ Hot and cold potable water under pressure is available.
- ✓ Lighting and ventilation are operable.



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