



When Electricity Fails in Food Facilities

A power outage could happen at any time and could last from several minutes to several days. Food facility operators **MUST** be prepared to safeguard foods when outages occur. Additionally, when hot water or adequate refrigeration cannot be provided, the law **REQUIRES** that food facilities be closed. Precautions **MUST** be taken whether you remain open for business, or temporarily close your doors to the public.

SAFEGUARD YOUR FOOD AND YOUR CUSTOMERS

- Serve prepared ready-to-eat perishable foods first.
- Perishable foods such as milk, meats, and other foods normally stored under refrigeration will spoil rapidly without it. These foods, if still cold, should be used as quickly as possible.
- Pack perishable foods in ice — from your own ice machine or purchased at another facility where electrical service has not been disrupted.
- Foods in the freezer can last several days without power if the door is **NOT** opened frequently. If possible, quickly consolidate frozen foods into one freezer. Foods that thaw and stay below 41° F may be used, but should not be refrozen.
- Prepared and other perishable foods should be discarded when safe hot and cold holding temperatures cannot be maintained.
- A power outage of 2 hours or less is not considered hazardous to food that was held under safe conditions when the outage began.

Always remember the importance of proper temperature control . . .

- ✓ Cold foods should be at 41 °F or below
- ✓ Hot foods should be at 135 °F or above

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

- If you use back-up generators as an emergency power source, run them outdoors.
- Battery operated emergency lights may be useful during emergencies.
- Without electricity, many pieces of essential equipment will not function, including refrigeration units, food warming and holding units, and cash registers.
- Without electricity, lights will not function, and many indoor areas may be too dark for employees to safely work in.
- Call PG&E:** 1-800-743-5000 for emergency and customer service, or 1-800-743-5002 for information on power outages.
- Call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline** for additional information on food safety during an emergency: 1-888-674-6854 (TTY)
- Call the Environmental Health Division** if you have any questions concerning the safety of your food: 559-675-7823

WHEN POWER GOES OUT

- Note the time when the outage begins.
- Take steps to keep cold foods at or below 41°F:
 - Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed.
 - If practical, group packages of cold food together.
 - Cover open refrigerated and frozen food cases.
 - **CAUTION:** *the use of dry ice in an enclosed area may result in unsafe build-up of CO₂ (carbon dioxide).*
- Use caution with hot foods:
 - Discard food that is in the process of being cooked, but has not yet reached the final temperature.
 - Do not place hot foods in refrigerators or freezers.
 - Use “canned heat” under foods on electric steam tables to help maintain food at or above 135°F.
 - Use ice and/or ice-baths to rapidly cool small batches of hot food.

DISCONTINUE FOOD PREPARATION IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS EXIST

- No hot water or inadequate water pressure.
- Inability to properly wash, rinse, and sanitize utensils.
- Hood ventilation and make-up air is not working AND you have equipment that uses gas or solid fuel...

DANGER: *a build-up of toxic fumes may cause injury or death.*
- Lack of sufficient light in food prep areas, which may be dangerous to your employees.
- Unsafe food temperatures, including:
 - Cold holding
 - Hot holding
 - Cooking

WHEN POWER IS RESTORED

- Check internal food temperatures to identify potentially hazardous foods that have been in the temperature danger zone, and follow guidelines listed below:

length of outage	Internal Temperature of REFRIGERATED Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHF) when power is restored		
	45°F or below	46°F to 50°F	50°F or above
0-2 hours	PHF can be sold	Immediately cool PHF to 41°F or below within 2 hours	PHF cannot be sold
2-3 hours	PHF can be sold, but must be cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours	Immediately cool PHF to 41°F or below within 1 hour	
4 or more hours	Immediately cool PHF to 41°F or below within 1 hour	PHF cannot be sold	
IF FOOD CANNOT BE COOLED AS SPECIFIED ABOVE, IT CANNOT BE SOLD			

length of outage	Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHF) in HOT HOLDING Units below 135°F when power is restored
0-2 hours	1. Food may be sold if reheated to 165°F and then held at 135°F or above; OR 2. Food may be sold if cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours following restoration of power; if food cannot be cooled within 2 hours, it cannot be sold.
2 or more hours	PHF cannot be sold

BEFORE REOPENING YOUR FACILITY

- All unsafe potentially hazardous foods **MUST** be discarded.
- Electricity and gas services **MUST** be restored.
- All equipment **MUST** be operating properly, including:
 - Refrigeration
 - Hot holding
- Hot water (minimum 120°F) **MUST** be available for hand washing, dishwashing, and cleaning (water must be potable and under pressure).
- Toilet facilities must be fully operational.

DISPOSAL OF FOOD

- Potentially hazardous foods held at unsafe temperatures prior to the power outage **MAY NOT** be safe to eat... **when in doubt, throw it out!**
- If food must be discarded, document the type and amount, and the reason for disposal for insurance and regulatory records.
- Small quantities of food for disposal can be denatured with a cleaning product (e.g., household bleach) and placed in your normal refuse container.
- To discard large quantities of food, contact your refuse disposal company or the local landfill for instructions.