

FOOD SAFETY

During A Power Outage

The safety of potentially hazardous food items is a major problem following any storm or other occurrence in which the electricity to your facility has been interrupted for an extended period of time.

Potentially hazardous foods include high protein foods, such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products, pasta, rice and cooked vegetables, which support the rapid and progressive growth of disease-causing bacteria.

The following guide is intended to help ensure the safety of your food supply if a power outage occurs.

I. When the Power Outage Occurs

- Document the time the outage begins.
- Discontinue all cooking and serving operations.
- Discard food products that are in the process of being cooked but have not yet reached the final cooking temperature.
- Do not place any hot food items inside of the refrigerators or freezers. This will rapidly raise the ambient temperature of the units.
- Rapidly cool any food products that were in the process of cooking and have reached the final cooking temperature or food products that were being hot-held at 135⁰ F by using an ice bath or chill sticks with frequent stirring.
- Utilize a generator if one is available.
- The person in charge must contact the Shelby City Health Department and inform them of the power outage. Provide the time the outage occurred and precautions taken. 419-347-5131 or 342-5226.

A. Maintain Foods at Safe Temperatures

1. Refrigerated Food

- Refrigerated potentially hazardous foods must be stored at or below 41⁰ F.
- Keep refrigerator door closed as much as possible. Every time the door opens, cold air escapes causing the foods inside to reach unsafe temperatures.
- Cover open refrigerated and frozen food cases, especially vertical displays.
- Group packages of cold food together to reduce heat gain.
- Dry, block or bagged ice can be used inside of the refrigeration units to aid in keeping the food below the required 41⁰ F.
- Food in refrigerators should be safe as long as the power is out no more than four hours.

- Moving refrigerated foods to a walk-in freezer or obtaining a refrigerated truck are other methods of keeping potentially hazardous foods cold.
- Check internal food temperatures using a properly calibrated and sanitized 0-220⁰ F product thermometer and record the temperatures.

2. Frozen Foods

- Keep freezer doors closed as much as possible. Every time the door is opened, cold air escapes causing the foods inside to reach unsafe temperatures.
- Do not refreeze any food items that have thawed completely. If food items still contain ice crystals and are 41⁰ F, they are safe to refreeze.
- A full freezer should keep food safe for about 48 hours (a half-full freezer about 24 hours).

3. Hot Foods

- Do not place hot foods in refrigerators or freezers.
- Use “canned heat” under foods on electric steam tables to help maintain potentially hazardous foods at 135⁰ F or above.
- If available, transfer hot foods in electric hot-holding units to chaffing dishes.
- Use ice and/or chill sticks to rapidly cool small batches of hot food.

4. Questionable Foods

- Discard any of the following potentially hazardous food products that have been above 41⁰ F for more than four hours or have an unusual color, odor or texture:
 - ~ Meat, poultry, fish, and eggs – raw or cooked
 - ~ Milk, cream, butter and cheese
 - ~ Casseroles, stews, or soups
 - ~ Lunch meats and hot dogs
 - ~ Cooked pasta and rice
 - ~ Custard, chiffon, pumpkin pies or cheesecake
 - ~ Cream-filled pastries
 - ~ Cut melons
 - ~ Cooked vegetables

B. Disposal of Food

- Document the type of any discarded food products and the estimated amounts in pounds, cases, bottles, etc. for insurance purposes.
- Small volumes of food to be discarded should be denatured with a cleaning product (bleach) and placed in the outdoor refuse bin.
- To discard large volumes of food, contact your refuse disposal company.

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II. When Power is Restored

- Check the internal food temperatures using a properly calibrated and sanitized 0-220⁰ F product thermometer and record all temperatures.
- Identify and discard potentially hazardous foods that may have been above 41⁰ F or above or below 135⁰ F for more than 4 hours.
- Evaluate each item separately. When in doubt, throw it out. The risk of a foodborne illness is never worth the cost of discarding food.
- If practical, separate packages of food in refrigeration units and freezers to allow for faster re-cooling.
- Contact the Shelby City Health Department and inform them of the time the power returns.

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