

## Food Safety for Food Establishments During a Power Outage

### 1. Do two things immediately:

- a. Write down the time the power went off.
- b. Check food temperatures with a thermometer and write them down.

### 2. Keep temperature records while the power is out.

- a. Check cold food every 2 hours for each unit.
- b. Write down the times and temperatures.

### 3. For food being held cold (such as in a refrigerator at 41° F or below):

- a. Write down the time when food rises above 41° F.
- b. Discard all cold food that has been above 41° F for more than 4 hours.

### 4. For frozen foods that thaw out:

- a. If thawed food does not exceed 41° F for more than four hours, it may be refrozen. (However, re-freezing may make some foods watery or mushy.)

### 5. To keep cold food cold longer:

- b. Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature (except while checking temperatures every two hours).
- c. Cover open units with a tarp.
- d. Don't add hot food to units.
- e. Group chilled foods together to reduce warming.
- f. A closed refrigerator can keep food cold for up to four hours; a closed freezer for up to two days. A half-filled freezer will warm up twice as fast as a full one.

### 6. Recovery when the power returns:

- a. Review temperature records.
- b. Discard food as required (see #7 below).
- c. Reset all breakers, equipment, etc.

### 7. Discard or salvage:

- a. Refrigerated or frozen food should be discarded if:
  - Above 41° F for four hours or more.
  - Frozen and then thawed for four or more hours.
  - Deteriorated in quality or has an unusual appearance, color, or odor.

- b. Potentially Hazardous Food (PHF) must be discarded if it has been in the “Temperature Danger Zone” (41° F-135° F) for more than 4 hours. PHFs include:
- Animal food that is raw or heat-treated:
    - Ground beef, cooked roast beef, veal, lamb, poultry, fish, seafood, luncheon meats, hot dogs, hams, etc.
  - Plant foods that are heat-treated or consist of raw seed sprouts
    - Cooked pasta, rice, peas, corn, beans, etc.
  - Cut melons
    - Watermelon, musk or honeydew melons
  - Cut leafy greens
    - Cut, shredded, sliced, chopped or torn iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, leaf lettuce, escarole, endive, spring mix, spinach, cabbage, kale, arugula, chard, etc.
  - Cut tomatoes or mixtures of cut tomatoes
  - Garlic-in-oil mixtures
  - Eggs and dairy products
    - Eggs or egg products, ice cream, yogurt
    - Milk, cream, buttermilk, cream-based foods or soups
    - Soft cheeses such as cream, ricotta, brie, etc.
  - Desserts
    - Pies, cakes, and pastries containing custard cheese, chiffon, meringue or pumpkin
  - Soups, stews, casseroles or similar dishes containing meats, pasta, rice, eggs, or cheeses
- c. Partially cooked food should be discarded if without power for more than one hour.
- d. Frozen foods, if stored in a sealed walk-in or cabinet and where ambient temperature has remained below 41° F, may be salvaged.

## 7. Remember:

1. Cancel incoming food supply shipments.
2. Never taste food to determine its safety.
3. When in doubt, throw it out.

## References:

*Emergency Handbook for Food Managers*, Twin Cities Metro Advanced Practice Centers (APC), supported by funding from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), First printing, September 2005

*A Consumer's Guide to Food Safety: Severe Storms and Hurricanes*,  
[www.fsis.usda.gov/fact\\_sheets/Severe\\_Storms\\_and\\_Hurricanes\\_Guide/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/fact_sheets/Severe_Storms_and_Hurricanes_Guide/index.asp)