

Guidelines for Food Safety during a Temporary Power Outage

The food items of concern are those that are potentially hazardous foods (PHF). Generally PHF are moist, perishable foods in which bacteria can grow most easily during the time when the food is held in the temperature danger zone (41°F to 135°F).

A POWER OUTAGE OF 2 HOURS OR LESS IS NOT CONSIDERED HAZARDOUS TO FOOD THAT IS HELD UNDER SAFE CONDITIONS WHEN THE POWER LOSS BEGINS. HOWEVER, ALL EFFORTS NEED TO BE MADE TO KEEP ALL HOT OR COLD HOLDING FOOD EQUIPMENT DOORS CLOSED UNTIL POWER IS RESTORED.

When there is a power outage...

- Note the time at which the power outage begins
- Discard food products that are in the process of being cooked and will not reach the final required internal temperature for that food item.

ACTIONS THAT CAN KEEP FOOD SAFE FOR SEVERAL HOURS

Cold Potentially Hazardous Foods

- ✓ Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible
- ✓ If practical, group packages of cold foods together to reduce surface area
- ✓ Cover open refrigerated and frozen food cases, especially vertical display cases
- ✓ CAUTION: the use of dry ice may result in unsafe build-up of CO₂ (Carbon Dioxide)

Hot Potentially Hazardous Foods

- ✓ Do NOT place hot foods in refrigerators or freezers
- ✓ Use “canned heat” under foods when applicable to help maintain PHF 135°F
- ✓ Use ice or ice baths to rapidly cool small batches of hot foods

Discontinue Food Preparation if any of the Following Conditions Exist

- Inability to properly wash, rinse and sanitize utensils
- Inoperative hood ventilation and make-up air supply system in conjunction with gas or solid fuel heating and cooking equipment (DANGER: Toxic fumes may cause injury or death)
- Lack of sufficient light in food preparation areas to allow for safe food preparation or cleaning and sanitizing of food contact surfaces
- No hot water or inadequate water pressure
- Unsafe food temperatures (refer to the following table on food temperatures)

When Power is Restored

- Identify PHF that may have been in the temperature danger zone.
- Check internal temperature of all food items. Record the temperatures for review by the VDACS Inspector.
- If practical, separate packages of food in refrigeration and freezer units to allow for faster re-cooling.

Use the following tables to determine disposition of PHF:

Refrigerated PHF

Duration of Power Outage (Hours)	Food Temperatures		
0 - 2	45°F or below	46°F to 50°F	51°F or above
	PHF can be sold	Immediately cool PHF to 41°F or below within 2 hours	PHF <u>cannot</u> be sold
2 - 3	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 2 hours	
4+	Immediately cool PHF to 41°F or below within 1 hours	PHF <u>cannot</u> be sold	

PHF in Hot Holding Units

Duration of Power Outage	Foods below 135°F in hot holding units when power is restored
Less than 2 hours	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. May be sold if reheated to 165°F and held at 135°F or above; or 2. May be sold if rapidly cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours following restoration of power 3. Been below 135°F for less than four (4) hours but must have time it fell below 135°F documented.
More than 2 hours	PHF <u>cannot</u> be sold

Reopening

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

1. All unsafe PHF has been discarded
 - a. If there are any questions regarding the safety of specific foods, contact your local Food Safety Specialist with VDACS.
 - b. Ensure you have the type and amounts of food discarded for VDACS review
2. Electricity and gas services have been restored.
3. All circuit breakers have been properly reset as needed.
4. All equipment and facilities are operating properly including:
 - a. Lighting
 - b. Refrigeration equipment
 - c. Hot holding equipment
 - d. Ventilation
 - e. Toilet Facilities
5. Water – Hot and Cold potable water under pressure for:
 - a. Handwashing
 - b. Proper dishwashing
 - c. Cleaning

If your facility was closed by your VDACS Food Safety Specialist, it must remain closed until you obtain official approval from VDACS to reopen for business.

Disposal of Food

- PHF that have been subjected to unsafe temperatures prior to the power outage might not be safe to eat even if the procedures in the table on the previous page are followed.
WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!
- If it is determined that food must be discarded, document the type of food, the amount of food and the reason for disposal for insurance and regulatory purposes.
- Small volumes of food to be discarded can be denatured with a cleaning product (such as bleach) and placed in the outside covered refuse bin.
- Large volumes of food to discard, contact your refuse disposal company or your local landfill operator for instructions.
- If you have any questions regarding the safety of specific foods always contact your local VDACS inspector for further assistance.