



Monterey County Department of Environmental Health

Guidelines for Food Safety at Retail Establishments During Temporary Power Outages Environmental Services Informational Bulletin

The County of Monterey, Environmental Health Branch, developed this guidance document for the retail food industry on what to do before, during and immediately after a power outage. This bulletin is provided to assist retail food facilities in safe food handling during power outages.

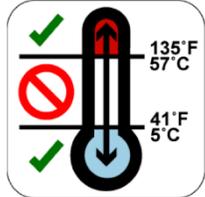
Before A Power Outage

What will be your standard operating procedures during an event of this type?

- Always be prepared. Have a written contingency plan that is developed ahead of time.
- Make sure your staff is knowledgeable and trained to respond to natural disaster events.

During a Power Outage

Your focus during a power outage is to keep foods out of the temperature danger zone as much as possible. Below are some action steps to take for both cold and hot foods.

Cold Foods	Hot Foods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document the time the power outage began. - Document the temperature of all food items. - Keep all cold holding units closed. - Use ice/ gel packs/ dry ice to keep foods cold. - Hot foods may be chilled with ice baths. - Do not accept perishable food deliveries. - Stop all cooking activities when ventilation for cooking equipment is not functional. - If there is no hot water, YOU MUST CLOSE! - If lighting is not adequate, YOU MUST CLOSE! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document the time the power outage began. - Document the temperature of all food items. - Discard any foods in the process of being cooked that had not reached their appropriate final cooking temperature. - Cover hot food display cases with thermal blankets or lids to reduce the temperature loss. 

Note: Do not prepare food if you cannot properly wash your hands, clean and sanitize food contact surfaces, or maintain other required food safety practices.

After a Power Outage

The steps you take after a power outage will vary, depending on the length of time your facility was without power and how effectively you were able to keep your food out of the temperature danger zone.

Prior to resuming operations after a power outage, you should evaluate all potentially hazardous foods and discard any which have been subjected to severe temperature abuse as defined in the tables above. Any products discarded should be denatured sufficiently to prevent accidental consumption. If you are unable to verify the length of time a product spent in the temperature danger zone, it should be discarded. When in doubt, throw it out!

Table 1 - Refrigerated Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHF)

Duration of Outage (hours)	Temperature of Food When Power Returns		
	41°F or below	42°F to 49°F	50°F or above
0-2	PHF can be sold	Cool PHF to 41°F or below within 2 hours	Discard
2-3		Cool PHF to 41°F or below within 1 hour	
4+		Discard	

Table 2 - Hot Held Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHF)

Duration of Outage (hours)	Temperature of Food When Power Returns	
	135°F or above	134°F or below
0-2	PHF can be sold	1. May be sold if reheated to 165°F and then held at 135°F or above; or 2. May be sold as refrigerated food if rapidly cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours following the restoration of power.
2+		Discard

Checklist for Self-Opening Food Facility After a Power Outage

If electricity is off for over an hour:

- 1) For safety and liability reasons, you must close during extended power outages.
- 2) If you voluntarily close your facility during a power outage, ensure all of the following are met prior to re-opening:

	Hot water is available at all sinks. Calcode 114192: An adequate, protected, pressurized, potable supply of hot water and cold water shall be provided. Hot water shall be supplied at a minimum temperature of at least 120° F.
	Refrigerators are capable of holding foods at 41° F or below.
	Freezers are capable of holding foods in a solid frozen state.
	All electrical appliances are operational.
	Circuit breakers have been checked and reset if necessary.
	Food that has been in the "Danger Zone" (41°F - 134°F) for 2 hours or longer is discarded. Calcode 113996: Hazardous food shall be maintained at or above 135° F, or at or below 41° F.
	If food inside a freezer has thawed, but not exceeded 41° F, it must be cooked or stored inside an operating refrigerator. Thawed food must never be refrozen.
	Foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, soft cheese, leftovers, and other similar potentially hazardous foods should be discarded if they are held above 41° F for more than 2 hours.

During extended power outages the Health Department may order your facility to close.

- 1) If your facility has been ordered to be closed by our department, you may not re-open until approval is granted from our department.

	The facility must be inspected by our Environmental Health Specialist prior to reopening.
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