

Response, cont.

4. Thoroughly wash all food contact surfaces, such as metal pans, ceramic dishes, and utensils that came in contact with flood water with hot soapy water. Sanitize by boiling them in clean water or by immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 tablespoon unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of drinking water.
5. *All flooded facilities require Health Department inspection PRIOR to re-opening.*

Steps To Follow To Remove Odors from Refrigerators and Freezers From Spoiled Food:

1. Dispose of spoiled or questionable food.
2. Remove shelves, crispers, and ice trays. Wash them thoroughly with hot water and detergent. Then rinse with a sanitizing solution (1 tablespoon unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water).
3. Wash the interior of the refrigerator and freezer, including the door and gasket, with hot water and baking soda. Rinse with sanitizing solution as above.
4. Leave the door open for about 15 minutes to allow free air circulation.

***When in Doubt,
Throw it Out!***

For More Information

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Restaurants and Food Safety During Emergencies



What to do when:

- the power goes out,
- water service is interrupted,
- flood waters strike and
- other disasters occur.

Darien Health Department

What Is The Problem?

Emergencies such as power outages, floods, interruption of water service and other problems can affect the safety of food. Knowing what to do before and after an emergency can help you reduce the risk of customer illness and minimize the amount of food that may be lost due to spoilage.

In Connecticut, power outages can be a common problem. Power outages can occur at any time of the year and it may take from a few hours to several days for electricity to be restored. Without electricity or a cold source, food stored in refrigerators and freezers can become unsafe fairly quickly. Bacteria in food grow rapidly at temperatures between 45 and 140 °F, and if these foods are consumed, people can become very sick.

The Requirements

Water and Sewer Service: Every food service establishment that serves food to the public needs potable water and an operational sewer system in order to be open for business. The absence of any of these basic services would pose an immediate health hazard meaning that establishments must close for business until water and/or sewer service is restored. If there is a sewage backup, the facility cannot reopen until it has been completely cleaned, sanitized and inspected by health department representatives.

Power Outages: State regulations require that all potentially hazardous foods be kept refrigerated at or below 45 ° F. This may be difficult when the power is out for an extended period of time. To verify safe storage temperatures of food without opening the doors of the units, the Darien Health Department recommends that all food service facilities have external digital recording thermometers for refrigeration units.

Once food temperatures exceed 45 °F for more than four (4) hours, the food must be discarded.

Donating Food to Emergency Shelters

In June of 2012, Governor Malloy signed a bill that limits restaurant liability for food donated to emergency shelters *as long as the food is safe for consumption*. This bill also requires insurers to reimburse for donated food in the same way as they would cover for perishable food that is discarded. To assist in managing this situation, the Darien Health Department is instituting a food donation program which works as follows:

1. Health Department officials must be contacted before food service establishments can donate food to shelters.
2. To ensure the safety of foods, Health Department officials must perform an inspection of the food service facility before food is donated.
3. Health department officials will assist with coordinating the safe transportation of the prepared or donated food to local emergency shelters.
4. Please be aware that ***no food will be accepted at a shelter unless it is approved as being safe by the health department.*** Also, there must be capacity to accept, store and serve the food safely at the shelter.

Preparedness

To prepare for a possible weather emergency:

1. Keep an EXTERNAL appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer to monitor temps without opening the door. This will help keep the food colder, longer!
2. Keep the freezer full - this helps keep the cold in.
3. Freeze containers of water ahead of time to make ice to help keep food cold in the freezer and refrigerator after the power is out.

Preparedness, cont.

4. Freeze refrigerated items such as leftovers, milk and fresh meat and poultry that are not needed immediately — this helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.
5. Plan ahead and know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased.
6. Secure the use of a generator to keep refrigeration units operational. Make sure these units are properly installed. ***Improper installation and inadequate ventilation for generators can be dangerous and fatal!***

Response

Steps to Follow If the Power Goes Out:

1. **Notify the Health Department.** Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for more than 4 hours if it is unopened.
2. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.
3. Obtain dry or block ice to keep the refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time.
4. ***Prior to re-opening for service to the public, any facility that has experienced an extended power outage must be inspected by a Health Department representative.***

Steps to Follow If Flooding Occurs:

1. Use only bottled water that has not come in contact with flood water. Discard any bottled water that may have come in contact with flood water.
2. Discard all food if there is any chance that boxes/containers may have come in contact with flood water regardless of whether or not the container is waterproof.
3. Discard wooden cutting boards and plastic utensils that may have come in contact with flood water.