

EMERGENCY RESPONSES TO WATER OUTAGES, SEWAGE BACKUPS, OR POWER OUTAGES, FIRES, FLOODS AND OTHER NATURAL DISASTERS

WATER OUTAGES

Water outages can be planned or unplanned. The water company may notify you that water service will be interrupted for a specified period of time. On other occasions, water service might be interrupted as a result of a broken water main or water line. What ever the reason you must not operate your food service establishment without water service. There are no exceptions within Chapter 257, Food Service Establishment Regulations, for you to continue operating your food service establishment without water service.

There are no stipulations for water to be off for a specified period of time to cause closure of your facility. There are no rules that permit food service to continue if you have been warned of an impending water outage. **It is very simple; NO WATER SERVICE, NO FOOD SERVICE.** Your food service establishment must close until water service is re-established.

Chapter 257, Food Service Establishment Regulations, also states that a food service establishment must cease operation if it does not have hot water. If only a certain area within the food service establishment is affected by no hot or cold running water, only that area must be closed.

SEWAGE BACKUPS

Sewage backups can occur anytime. What ever the reason you must not operate your food service establishment or, depending on the extent of the sewage backup, parts of your food service establishment sewage is surfacing in your facility. There are no exceptions within Chapter 257, Food Service Establishment Regulations, for you to continue operating your food service establishment with surfacing sewage.

Chapter 257, Food Service Establishment Regulations, also states that a food service establishment must cease operation if it has a sewage backup. If only a certain area within the food service establishment is affected by the backup, only that area must be closed. However, reopening or restarting an operation in your facility that has been involved in a sewage backup must be approved by OCCHD.

POWER OUTAGES

Power outages can be planned or unplanned. At times the power company may notify you that the power is going to be off for a period of time while they repair lines. At other times, power can be affected by high winds, floods, fires, ice storms, auto accidents, or other things. Whatever the reason you must take action to protect the food in your possession.

Planned Outages: If a planned outage is less than 4 hours, you can probably leave everything inside your closed refrigerators or freezers without having to do anything. However, if the outage is scheduled to last for more than 4 hours, you should:

- Obtain dry ice to maintain temperatures in both your refrigerators and your freezers

OR

- Make arrangements to move your food to another location. There are companies that will rent you refrigerated containers to hold food until the power is on.

AND

- Close the facility until power is restored and re-opening granted by OCCHD.

Unplanned Outages: If your food facility loses power and you do not know how long you are going to be without power, you should:

- Obtain dry ice to maintain temperatures in both your refrigerators and your freezers

OR

- Make arrangements to move your food to another location. There are companies that will rent you refrigerated containers to hold food until the power is on.

AND

- Close the facility until power is restored and approved by OCCHD.

If your facility is affected by a storm or other natural disaster and power is out for an extended period of time, you must contact the Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD), Consumer Protection Division for their guidance. As a convenience to you, OCCHD has provided a brief summary of what to do with foods affected by a power outage for an extended period of time. See Attachment 1.

FIRES

Large Fires: Fires pose especially hazardous conditions for food items. Large fires, not grease fires, can generate very hot conditions for even the best packaged foods, and most large fires that involve the structural integrity of the food facility give off noxious, poisonous vapors that can leach into foods even through the packaging. Therefore, it is best to err on the side of caution and discard all foods affected by the fire. This applies to those foods that are inside refrigerators, freezers and cabinets as well as those in the food preparation areas. Any food affected by a fire must be discarded as garbage and not sold through a salvage operation. Allowing such foods to be purchased by a salvage company allows entry of adulterated foods into our food supply.

Small Fires: Sometimes only a small fire is involved that does not involve the structure of the facility. Each one of these must be evaluated by the Environmental Specialist investigating the fire. In some cases, your automatic fire extinguishers may have discharged and spread its contents around your kitchen area. In such cases you must follow the directions of the Environmental Specialist to prevent the sale of adulterated foods.

FLOODS

Any food that may have come into contact with flood waters must be discarded. Any food that was in an air tight and water tight container may have the label removed, the container washed using a brush, rinsed and sanitized and then used. When labels are removed from cans or other packaged foods, the product must be re-labeled with an indelible pen. All refrigerators, freezers, cabinets and other areas where food is stored must be washed with soapy water, rinsed and sanitized using an approved sanitizer at appropriate strength levels. Food contact surfaces, utensil, pots, pans, dishes, trays, etc., must be washed, rinsed and sanitized prior to use. Discard any items made of porous material, such as wood, plastic or rubber. Any dishes with deep cracks should be thrown away as well. These items can't be sanitized. No food facility may begin operation after a flood until approved by the OCCHD.

Kitchen items made of iron probably will be rusted. Remove rust by scouring with steel wool. After scouring and sanitizing iron items, season them before use to prevent food from sticking to them. Lightly coat the cooking surfaces with cooking oil and place them in an oven at 250 degrees F for two to three hours. The oil will seal the pores of the metal so food will not stick easily.

If cupboards and food preparation surfaces were in contact with floodwater, clean and sanitize them before storing the clean dishes, pots and pans, Yearn's says. Wash the surfaces with hot detergent solution. Then sanitize them using a solution of two tablespoons of liquid household bleach to a gallon of water.

The following tables outline recommendations from the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) for disposition of foods involved in power disruptions.

When to save it, when to throw it out!

REFRIGERATED FOODS

Food Item	Held above 40°F for over 2 hours
MEAT, POULTRY & SEAFOOD	
Raw or leftover cooked meat, poultry, fish, or seafood	Discard
Thawing meat or poultry	Discard
Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, or egg salad	Discard
Gravy, stuffing, broth	Discard
Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef	Discard
Pizza – with any topping	Discard
Canned hams labeled “Keep Refrigerated”	Discard
Canned meats and fish, opened	Discard
CHEESE	
Soft cheeses: blue/bleu, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, Neufchatel, Queso blanco fresco	Discard
Hard Cheeses: Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, provolone, Romano	Safe
Shredded cheeses	Discard
Low-fat Cheeses	Discard
Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar)	Safe
DAIRY	
Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt, eggnog, soymilk	Discard
Butter, margarine	Safe
Baby formula, opened	Discard
EGGS	
Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products	Discard
Custards and puddings	Discard
CASSEROLES, SOUPS AND STEWS	
All types	Discard
FRUITS	
Fresh fruits, cut	Discard
Fruit juices, opened	Safe
Canned fruits, opened	Safe
Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates	Safe

When to save it, when to throw it out!

REFRIGERATED FOODS (CONTINUED)

SAUCES, SPREADS, & JAMS	
Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish	Discard if above 50°F for over 8 hours
Peanut butter	Safe
Jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, catsup, olives, pickles	Safe
Worcestershire, soy, barbecue	Safe
Hoisin sauce	Discard
Fish sauces (oyster sauce)	Discard
Opened vinegar-based dressings	Safe
Opened creamy-based dressings	Discard
Spaghetti sauce, opened jar	Discard
BREAD, CAKES, COOKIES, PASTA & GRAINS	
Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, tortillas	Safe
Refrigerated biscuits, rolls, cookie dough	Discard
Cooked pasta, rice, potatoes	Discard
Pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinaigrette	Discard
Fresh pasta	Discard
Cheesecake	Discard
Breakfast foods, - waffles, pancakes, bagels	Safe
PIES & PASTRY	
Pastries, cream filled	Discard
Pies made from fruit	Safe
VEGETABLES	
Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices	Safe
Greens, pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged	Discard
Vegetables, raw	Safe
Vegetables, cooked; tofu	Discard
Vegetable juice, opened	Discard
Baked potatoes	Discard
Commercial garlic in oil	Discard
Potato salad	Discard

When to save it, when to throw it out!

FROZEN FOODS

FOOD	Still contains ice crystals & is 41°F or less	Thawed & held above 41°F for over 2 hours
MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD		
Beef, veal, lamb, pork, and ground meats	Refreeze	Discard
Poultry and ground poultry	Refreeze	Discard
Variety meats (liver, kidney, heart, chitterlings)	Refreeze	Discard
Casseroles, stews and soups	Refreeze	Discard
Fish, shellfish, breaded seafood products	Refreeze, however there will be some texture & flavor loss	Discard
DAIRY		
Milk	Refreeze. Texture loss possible	Discard
Eggs (out of shell) and egg products	Refreeze	Discard
Ice cream, frozen yogurt	Discard	Discard
Cheese (soft and semi-soft)	Refreeze. Texture loss possible	Discard
Hard cheeses	Refreeze	Refreeze
Shredded cheeses	Refreeze	Discard
Casseroles containing milk, cream, eggs, soft cheeses	Refreeze	Discard
Cheesecake	Refreeze	Discard

When to save it, when to throw it out!

FROZEN FOODS

FRUITS		
Juices	Refreeze	Refreeze unless mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops then discard.
Home or commercially packaged	Refreeze. Texture loss possible	Refreeze unless mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops then discard.
VEGETABLES		
Juices	Refreeze	Discard after held above 41°F for 6 hours otherwise refreeze.
Home or commercially packaged or blanched	Refreeze. Texture loss possible	Discard after held above 41°F for 6 hours otherwise refreeze.

When to save it, when to throw it out!

FROZEN FOODS (CONTINUED)

FOOD	Still contains ice crystals & is 41°F or less	Thawed & held above 41°F for over 2 hours
BREADS & PASTRIES		
Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (without custard fillings)	Refreeze	Refreeze
Cakes, pies, pastries with custard or cheese filling	Refreeze	Discard
Pie crusts, commercial and homemade bread dough	Refreeze. Some quality loss may occur	Refreeze. Some quality loss may occur
OTHER		
Casseroles – pasta, rice based	Refreeze	Discard
Flour, cornmeal, nuts	Refreeze	Refreeze
Breakfast items – waffles, pancakes, bagels	Refreeze	Refreeze
Frozen meals, entrees, specialty items (pizza, sausage and biscuit, meat pie, convenience foods)	Refreeze	Discard
***FOR ALL OTHER FOODS, REMEMBER, “WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!”		