

## FACT SHEET

# FOOD SAFETY DURING A POWER OUTAGE COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS

### 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. Food being held cold (such as in a refrigerator at 41 degrees F or below):

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

### 4. Frozen foods that thaw out:

- a. If thawed food does not exceed 41 degrees F for more than four hours, it may be refrozen. (Refreezing however can make some foods watery or mushy.)

### 5. Keeping 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.
- c. Reset all breakers, equipment, etc.

### 7. Discard or salvage:

- a. Refrigerated or frozen food should be discarded if:
  - Above 41 degrees Fahrenheit 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 degrees F-140 degrees F) for more than 4 hours. PHFs include:
  - Meat and mixed dishes:
    - beef, veal, lamb, poultry, fish, seafood, luncheon meats, hot dogs, hams, etc.
    - Soups, stews, casseroles or similar dishes containing meats, pasta, rice, eggs, or cheeses
  - 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
- Cut melons and cooked vegetables
  - Watermelon, musk or honeydew melons, cooked peas or corn or beans
- 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 degrees 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)