

FOOD SAFETY DURING TEMPORARY POWER OUTAGES

- RETAIL FOOD FACILITIES -

This Food Safety Notice is being issued by the Lassen County Environmental Health Department to provide guidance to the retail food industry. The procedure was developed through the collaborative efforts of the Retail Food Industry, food safety experts at the University of California at Davis, the California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health, California Conference of Local Health Officers, and the California Department of Health Services.

Lassen County is experiencing an electrical power outage. Appropriate decision-making before, during, and immediately after power outages is necessary to protect consumers from unsafe food and minimize product loss. The Department recommends that food retailers develop a plan and obtain appropriate emergency supplies before the need arises.

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

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, but which have not yet reached the final temperature.

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 food together to reduce heat gain
- ↗ Cover open refrigerated and frozen food cases, especially vertical displays
- ↗ Caution: The use of dry ice may result in unsafe build-up of CO₂ (Carbon Dioxide).

Hot Potentially Hazardous Foods

- ↗ Use ice and/or ice baths to rapidly cool small batches of hot food
- ↗ Do not place hot foods in refrigerators or freezers
- ↗ Use "canned heat" under foods on electric steam tables to help maintain PHF at 135°F

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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 systems 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 and cleaning and sanitizing of food contact surfaces.
- ↗ No hot water, inadequate water pressure
- ↗ Unsafe food temperatures (see tables below)

WHEN THE POWER IS RESTORED

- ↗ Identify PHF that may have been in the temperature danger zone
- ↗ Check the internal food temperature
- ↗ If practical, separate packages of food in refrigeration units and freezers to allow for faster re-cooling



Refrigerated Potentially Hazardous Food

Duration of Power Outage (in hours)	Food Temperatures		
	45° F	46° F - to - 50° F	More than 50° F
0-2 (hours)	PHF can be sold	Cool PHF to 41°F or below within 2 hours	PHF cannot be sold
2-3 (hours)	PHF can be sold, but must be cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours.	Cool PHF to 41°F or below within 1 hours	
4 (hours)	Immediately cool PHF to 41°F or below within 1 hour		
Over 4 (hours)	PHF cannot be sold		

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Potentially Hazardous Food in **Hot Holding Units**

Use the following table to determine what to do with PHF that is *held in hot holding units and below 135°F* at the time the power is restored:

During Power Outage	Food below 135°F in Hot Holding Units When Power is Restored
2 hours or less	 May be sold if reheated to 165°F and then hold at 135°F or above, or  May be sold if rapidly cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours following restoration of power
More than 2 hours	PHF cannot be sold

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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 potentially hazardous food has been discarded
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:
 - ↗ Lighting
 - ↗ Refrigeration
 - ↗ Hot holding
 - ↗ Ventilation
 - ↗ Toilet facilities
5. Hot (minimum 120° F, except hand washing 100-108° F) and cold potable water, under pressure for:
 - ↗ Hand washing
 - ↗ Proper dishwashing
6. Note: If your facility was closed by the Public Health Department, it must remain closed until you obtain approval from the Public Health Department to reopen.

DISPOSAL OF FOOD

PHF that has been subjected to unsafe temperatures prior to the power outage might not be safe to eat even if the procedures in the tables on the previous page are followed.

- ↗ If it is determined that food must be discarded, document the type and 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 refuse bin.
- ↗ To discard large volumes of food, contact your refuse disposal company or your local landfill operator for disposal instructions.
- ↗ If there are any questions regarding the safety of specific foods, contact your local environmental health agency.
- ↗ **When In Doubt, Throw It Out!!**

Questions or Additional Information?

Contact Lassen County Environmental Health staff at (530)251-8528 during normal working hours, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.