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Food Safety During Temporary Power Outages

- Retail Food Facilities -

Before a Power Outage

Develop a plan of action on how to keep refrigerated foods at or below 41°F in your facility during a temporary power outage. This may include consolidating foods into insulated containers or walk-in coolers, covering open display cases, and purchasing dry ice from local retailers. You should also keep a supply of ice or gel packs frozen and readily accessible. Calibrated food thermometers, a battery operated clock and a temperature log will help you monitor and document the temperature of the food and the time it spent in the temperature danger zone of 42°F-134°F.

During a Power Outage

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

Cold Foods

- Document temperature of the food and the time the power outage began.
 - Keep all refrigerator/freezer doors closed as much as possible.
 - Cover open, refrigerated display cases or consolidate products to lessen heat gain.
 - Use ice, gel packs, or dry ice* as necessary to keep foods cold.
 - Be sure the water from melting ice doesn't contaminate the food.
- (* Thawing dry ice releases carbon dioxide. Exercise caution when using in large quantities or in enclosed rooms.)

Hot Foods

- Document temperature of the food and the time the power outage began.
- Discard any foods in the process of being cooked that had not reached their appropriate final cooking temperature when the outage occurred.
- Cover hot food display cases with thermal blankets or lids to reduce temperature loss.

Do not prepare food if you cannot properly wash your hands with warm water, clean and sanitize food contact surfaces, and maintain other required food safety practices.

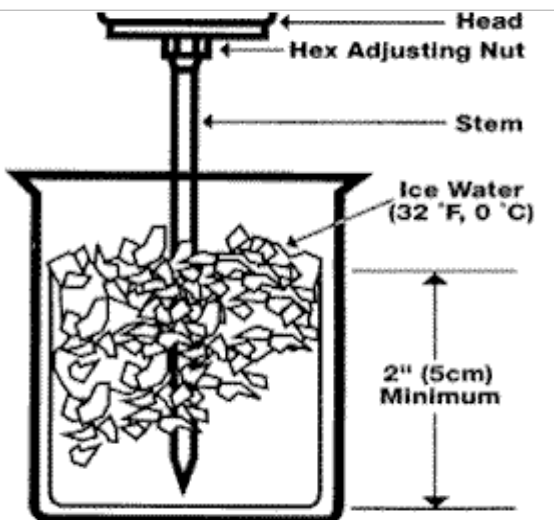
After a Power Outage

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. The chart on the next page will help you decide how to handle potentially hazardous foods (PHF) in your facility.

Duration of Power Outage	Cold Potentially Hazardous Food Temperatures		
	45°F or below	46°F to 49°F	50°F or above
0-2 hours	Food can be used, but cool to 41°F if not using immediately	Immediately cool to 41°F or below within 2 hours	Do not use
2-3 hours	Food can be used if cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours	Immediately cool to 41°F or below within 1 hour	Do not use
3-4 hours	Food can be used if cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours	Do not use	Do not use
beyond 4 hours	Do not use	Do not use	Do not use
	Hot Potentially Hazardous Food Temperatures		
2 hours or less	1. May be reheated to 165°F and held at 135°F or above; or 2. May be chilled to 41°F or below within 2 hours.		
More than 2 hours	Cannot be used		

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!

Don't Forget to Calibrate Your Thermometer!



The USDA offers these instructions for calibrating a stem thermometer with a hex nut under the dial. Ice Water. To use the ice water method, fill a large glass with finely crushed ice. Add clean tap water to the top of the ice and stir well. Immerse the food thermometer stem a minimum of 2 inches into the mixture without touching the sides or bottom of the glass. Wait a minimum of 30 seconds before adjusting to 32°. If you have a stem thermometer that is not adjustable and it is off by more than 2°F, discard and purchase a new thermometer.