

What to Do During a Temporary Power Outage

Following these procedures will help you save food during a power outage and keep your customers from eating or drinking food that has had an opportunity to grow bacteria. The food items we are most concern about during a power outage are **potentially hazardous foods (PHF)**. PHF are moist, perishable foods that bacteria will grow quickly in and on when the food is held in the temperature danger zone (41°F to 135°F).

WHEN THERE IS A POWER OUTAGE

- Note the time when the power outage starts and write it down.
- Discard food products that are in the process of being cooked and have not reached 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
- When 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

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

A POWER OUTAGE OF 2 HOURS OR LESS IS NOT CONSIDERED HAZARDOUS TO FOOD THAT IS HELD UNDER SAFE CONDITIONS WHEN THE OUTAGE BEGINS.

PHF IN HOT HOLDING UNITS

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

Duration of 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 held 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

- Check the internal temperatures of food
- Identify PHF that may have been in the temperature danger zone

REFRIGERATED PHF

Use separate packages of food in refrigeration units and freezers to allow for faster re-cooling

Use the table below as a guide for handling PHF stored in refrigeration units during power outages:

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

If food cannot be rapidly cooled as specified in the tables above, it cannot be sold.

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, circuit breakers have been properly reset as needed
3. All equipment and facilities are operating properly, including:
 - Lighting
 - Refrigeration
 - Toilet facilities
 - Hot holding
 - Ventilation
4. Hot (minimum 120° F) and cold potable water, under pressure for:
 - Hand washing
 - Proper dishwashing

If your *facility was closed by Kern County Environmental Health*, it must remain closed until you obtain official approval from that agency to reopen.

DISPOSAL OF FOOD

- PHF that has been subjected to temperature abuse prior to the power outage might not be safe to eat even if the procedures in the tables on the previous page are followed. **WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!**
- 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.
- Contact KCEHD at the numbers below for any questions regarding the safety of specific foods.

Please contact the Kern County Environmental Health Services Department at

(661) 862-8740 or (661) 321-3000 if you have any questions.

DISCONTINUE FOOD PREPARATION WHEN:

- No hot water, inadequate water pressure
- Inability to properly wash, rinse, and sanitize utensils
- Inoperative hood ventilation (*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
- Unsafe food temperatures (see table reverse side of this sheet)