

Marion County Health Department 573-221-1166
Food Service and Retail Food Establishments
Guidelines During a Power Outage

In the event of an extended power outage, the safe storage of potentially hazardous food products requiring refrigeration becomes a serious public health concern. Refrigeration and freezer units without power can only maintain a safe product temperature for a short period of time.

As the owner or operator of a food establishment, you are responsible for maintaining your products in a wholesome condition. **You are also responsible for ensuring that temperature-abused, or otherwise adulterated food products are not passed on (sold, traded or given) to consumers as their consumption can lead to outbreaks of serious foodborne illnesses.**

If electricity has not yet been restored to your establishment and you have been unable to make alternate arrangements for the storage of your refrigerated, potentially hazardous food products, the following guidelines shall be adhered to:

- All refrigerated, non-shelf-stable, potentially hazardous food items must be maintained at a temperature of 41° F or below and be protected from physical damage including water, chemicals, unauthorized personnel, etc. **Potentially hazardous foods are primarily those containing meat, fish, poultry and dairy products.**
- If the temperature of any non-shelf-stable, potentially hazardous food item exceeds 45° F for a period exceeding two (2) hours, the product must be discarded.
- If the temperature of any non-shelf-stable, potentially hazardous food item exceeds 45° F, and you cannot ascertain how long the product has been above 45° F, the product must be discarded.
- Frozen foods that become thawed, but remain below 45° F pose quality concerns, **NOT** public health concerns. Decisions regarding the use/and or refreezing of these products rest with their owner. If, however, the temperature of the thawed products exceeds 45° F for a period of two (2) hours, they too must be discarded.
- To prevent or discourage pilferage of discarded food products, the food should be denatured by pouring liquid bleach, ammonia, soap or similar products over the discarded food items in the dumpsters or trash cans. Notify your waste hauler to arrange for special pick-ups if necessary.

By adhering to the above stipulations, you can prevent serious illnesses from occurring, as well as protect yourself and your business from potential legal liabilities. You should keep an inventory of all discarded products for insurance purposes. Consult with your insurance carrier regarding specific requirements.

Remember that this is your responsibility. Health department staff members or our authorized representatives will be conducting checks of establishments to ensure compliance with food code regulations.