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INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS WITH LOSS OF ELECTRICAL POWER

For the purpose of defining an imminent health hazard for this guidance, an extended interruption of electrical service means that the electrical service has been interrupted for two hours or more. **The Person-in-Charge must:**

- Note the date and time of the interruption in electrical service
- Assess the affected operations
- Immediately notify the regulatory authority, and
- Implement their emergency procedures, if approved by the regulatory authority, or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the regulatory authority.
- In a widespread event, when contact with the regulatory agency is not possible, immediately discontinue operations if a safe operation cannot be maintained using alternative procedures.

ASSESSMENT

In the event of an emergency involving electrical service interruption, appropriate food establishment responses must be taken after an assessment of multiple factors including but not limited to:

- The complexity and scope of food operations,
- The duration of the emergency event,
- The impact on other critical infrastructure and services (example: water supply), and
- The availability of alternative procedures that can be used to meet the requirements of *N.J.A.C. Chapter 24, "Sanitation in Retail Food Establishments and Food and Beverage Vending Machines"* (NJ Food Code).

RESPONSE

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific affected food operations during an extended interruption of electrical service.

Refrigeration - The lack of adequate refrigeration may result in the growth of pathogenic or disease causing organisms and toxins in foods that require temperature control for food safety. Alternative Procedures

- Monitor and record food temperatures every 2 hours (see chart in Recovery Section for disposition of potentially hazardous food) – document that you have acted responsibly.
- Keep refrigeration equipment doors closed.
- Pack potentially hazardous food in commercially made ice or dry ice (use precautions for using dry ice).
- Relocate product in cases to walk-in boxes, freezers, or reefers if safe temperatures cannot be maintained in the cases.
- Do not put hot food into refrigeration equipment.

Ventilation - Inadequate mechanical ventilation may result in a build-up of cooking smoke, heat, steam, grease, grease laden air, etc. Alternative Procedures

- Discontinue all cooking operations.

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Lighting - The lack of artificial illumination may negatively impact personal safety, food preparation, food handling, cleaning equipment/utensils, premises, etc. Alternative Procedures

- Limit operation to daylight hours. Restrict operations to those that can be safely conducted in available natural light.
- Provide lighting using other power sources (i.e. battery operated lantern, flashlight, etc. if fire codes allow). Limit operation to those procedures that can be safely conducted using alternative lighting.

Cooking Equipment - Cooking equipment that is no longer functional may result in inadequate cooking processes that permit the survival and growth of pathogens. Alternative Procedures

- Evaluate time and temperature to determine if foods should be discarded.
- Discard raw animal/potentially hazardous foods that were in the cooking or re-heating process but did not reach a safe final temperature.

And

- Discontinue cooking operations.

Hot Food Holding - Hot holding equipment that is no longer functional may result in unsafe temperatures that allow for the growth of pathogens. Alternative Procedures

- Note the time the power outage begins.

And

- Discard all potentially hazardous food after 4 hours from being removed from temperature control (below 135° F).

Or

- Use an alternate heat source such as “canned heat” and monitor temperatures hourly. Note: If power returns within 4 hours, reheat food to 165° F.

Dishwashing Equipment - Equipment for cleaning and sanitizing utensils and tableware that is no longer operational may result in contamination of food contact surfaces. Alternative Procedures

- Use the three compartment sink if hot water is still available

Or

- Use single service tableware

And

- Discontinue operations that generate soiled utensils/tableware.

Water - Wells which rely on electric pumps will no longer function resulting in a water interruption. Alternative Procedures

- See “Interruption of Water Service” procedures.

Sewage Disposal - Sewage ejector pump(s) that no longer function may result in sewage overflow and backups. Alternative Procedures

- Discontinue all operations. Contact the local health department for possible options.

Electric Hot Water Heater - Electric hot water heaters will no longer function resulting in an interruption of hot water for effective ware washing and hand washing. Alternative Procedures

- Heat water on a gas cooking appliance.

RECOVERY

Recovery involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a normal safe operation. (See Extended Interruption of Water Service for re-opening considerations relative to the water supply.)

A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory authority.

Frozen foods that remain solid or semi-solid can be refrozen if food packages show no evidence of thawing such as weeping, stains, physical depreciation, evaporation, or container damage. If product is somewhat thawed or soft and has not exceeded 41°F on the outside and the inner core is still solid, it can

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be refrozen or further processed/cooked by food service operators. This product is not recommended for retail sale due to quality deficiencies.

Refrigerated Food Safety Guide

When power is restored, the following table should be used as a guide for handling potentially hazardous food (PHF) stored in refrigeration units that may have lost power. When in doubt, throw it out! (See the NJ Food Code for additional information regarding food temperatures.)

COLD FOODS INTERNAL TEMPERATURE GUIDANCE			
Time	42° - 45° F	46° - 50° F	51° F or above
0-2 hrs	PHF (TCS) can be sold	Immediately cool PHF (TCS) foods to 41°F or below within 2 hours	PHF (TCS) foods cannot be sold. DESTROY the food.*
2-3 hrs	PHF (TCS) can be sold but must be cooled to 41°F or below within 2 hours	Immediately cool PHF (TCS) to 41°F or below within 1 hour	
4 hrs	Immediately cool PHF (TCS) to 41°F or below within 1 hour	PHF (TCS) foods cannot be sold. DESTROY the food.*	
5+ hrs	PHF (TCS) foods cannot be sold. DESTROY the food.*		

*If the location was vacated during the power outage, upon return the storage equipment may be fully functioning and the food may be at proper temperature. However, if the duration of the power outage and the highest temperature of the food cannot be verified, all potentially hazardous food must be discarded.

Key areas to consider for returning to normal operation when power is restored

- Electricity, potable water, and/or gas services have been fully restored.
- All circuit breakers have been properly re-set as needed.
- All equipment and facilities are operating properly including: lighting, refrigeration (back to operating temperature of 41° F and below), hot holding, ventilation, water supply, sewage pumps, hot water heaters, toilet facilities, ware washing machines and hand washing facilities.
- Food contact surfaces, equipment and utensils cleaned and sanitized prior to resuming food-handling operations. This includes ice bins in ice machines where ice has melted during the interruption.
- Flush all water lines, change filters, etc.

Disposal of Food

Small volumes of food can be denatured (such as with bleach, a detergent or other cleaning product to render it unusable) or alternatively destroyed and placed in an outside refuse bin for removal. To discard large volumes of food, the firm should contact a disposal company for immediate transportation to a licensed landfill.