

Clinton County Health Department

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Restaurant Guidelines for Food Safety During a Power Outage

Handling food during a power outage

Food held in refrigerators or freezers may be unsafe when the power goes out, but loss of power does not always mean loss of food. Generally, food in the refrigerator is safe as long as the power outage is of short duration. Food can be held for a few hours if the following recommendations are followed:

- Keep the doors closed to maintain coldest temperatures, while power is off.
- Consider transporting potentially hazardous foods to an approved operational cold storage facility (such as a facility not affected by a power loss, or a refrigerated truck or ice storage).
- Extend storage life of high risk foods by using clean, uncontaminated ice and/or dry ice if doors must be reopened. Re-close doors as quickly as possible.

Recommendations for potentially hazardous foods are:

- Identify foods that have been in the danger zone (between 41-135°F) and discard as necessary. You cannot rely on appearance or odor to tell you if a food will make you sick.
- Check foods with a probe thermometer to insure proper temperature maintenance has not been compromised (sanitize the thermometer with an alcohol swab or chlorine solution after each use.)
- Do not re-freeze thawed food.

Prior to re-opening, ensure that:

- Hot (minimum 120°F) and cold potable water under pressure are available.
- Verify that all power breakers have been properly reset as needed (especially at the hot water heater and automatic gas supply solenoid).
- Handwashing facilities are fully operable.
- Toilet facilities are fully operable.
- Electricity and natural gas (if applicable) services are available.
- Refrigeration and/or freezer units are fully operable and capable of maintaining food temperatures (41°F or below for refrigeration units; food in a solid state for freezers.)
- Hot food holding units are capable of maintaining food temperatures at 135°F or above.
- Adequate and approved ventilation for gas-powered equipment are operable.
- Proper dishwashing and sanitizing of multi-use utensils are available.
- Adequate and approved lighting are available.
- All food can be protected from contamination.
- All potentially hazardous food out of temperature is discarded properly.
- Foods that were subsequently thawed in freezer units are not re-frozen.
- Call the Clinton County Health Department prior to re-opening at 618-594-2723 ext. 324.