



# No power? Now what?

## An Important Message from Environmental Health Services

Loss of power could affect the safety of your customers and employees. It is up to you to ensure the food you serve is safe, that your facility is safe and your employees know what to do.

### What can I expect to happen if the electricity goes out?

There will be a lot of inconveniences, potential hazards and possible costs:

- Customers will have to eat and/or leave in the dark.
- The cash register will not work.
- Employees could possibly slip or trip.
- Potential food loss because of food remaining too long in the Danger Zone.
- Potential loss of business because of either having to close down or curtail service.
- Customers could possibly become ill with a foodborne illness.

### How does Environmental Health Services (EHS) fit into the picture?

The concern of EHS is public health and safety. We are especially concerned about the following:

- **Food temperature.** Hot food must be kept hot (above 135°F) and cold food must be kept cold (below 41°F). How are you going to keep it in the proper temperature range?
- **Hot water for washing.** Does an electric heater heat your water?
- **Ventilation.** How can smoke and fumes be removed without the fans operating?
- **Light.** Is there adequate light in the food prep and utensil wash areas?

If you are unable to serve food that is safe and healthful, you must voluntarily close your business and not open again until you can serve your customers safe meals in a safe environment. If you serve unsafe food to your customers it will make them ill.



### What can I do?

Develop a plan and train your employees to follow it.

#### Plan now:

- Have a backup for lights, such as battery operated lamps and flashlights.
- Plan a backup menu that will not require power during preparation or rely on having the refrigerator door open very often.
- Design a system for handling the receipts while the register is not working.
- Keep plenty of ice on hand to cool food quickly.
- Know how to close down quickly.
- Make sure there is always at least one person on duty who can make decisions about food and personal safety. It's your business that might be liable.

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When the electricity goes off:



After the power comes back on:



- Keep the refrigerator doors closed to maintain the cold temperature inside the cooler. Further protect food by placing it in clean ice and/or dry ice in the cooler.
- Make decision about cooking. Remember, there is no ventilation.
- Decide:
  - Is the alternative light bright enough for safety? Are the employees and customers safe?
  - Is the food safe to serve?
  - Is staying open good for business in the long run? Is it time to close?
- Use your thermometers to check food temperature. Food that has been between 41°F and 135°F for more than 4 hours must not be eaten. When in doubt, throw it out. Remember! You can't rely on appearance or odor to tell if food will make someone sick.
- Don't refreeze thawed food.
- Check the hot water to make sure it is hot enough to properly wash hands and utensils.
- Check the toilets to make sure they are working.
- Check the coolers and freezers to make sure they are working and keeping the right temperature.
- Check the frozen food to see if it is still solidly frozen.

Use the following charts to determine the disposition of potentially hazardous foods:

REFRIGERATED FOODS	If power has been out:	Check the temperature of product when refrigeration is restored.		
		<i>If 45°F or less</i>	<i>If 45°F to 50°F, product must reach 41°F within:</i>	<i>If over 50°F</i>
	1 hour	May be sold - reduce temperature to 41°F ASAP	3 hours	Cannot be sold
	1½ hours		2½ hours	
	2 hours		2 hours	
	2½ hours		1½ hours	
	3 hours		1 hour	
	3½ hours		½ hour	
	4 hours		0 hours	

  

FOODS IN HOT HOLDING UNITS	If power has been out:	<b>Two hour limit on hot held product is allowed if product was fully cooked and held at 135°F or above at the time of the power outage.</b>
	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 following restoration of power.
	More than 2 hours	Cannot be reclaimed.

For more information check these websites:  
[www.CAISO.com](http://www.CAISO.com) • [www.calrest.org](http://www.calrest.org) (Link to California's Energy Crisis)