



NKYHEALTH
NORTHERN KENTUCKY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Emergency Guidelines For Food Service Establishments

Please contact NKY Health for Additional Assistance During Emergencies.

Northern Kentucky Health Department

8001 Veterans Memorial Drive, Florence, KY 41042 | 859-341-4151 | www.nkyhealth.org



Emergency Response Procedures In Retail Food Establishments

Emergencies relating to food safety bring new challenges to the food systems of today. The food industry, scientists, and regulatory agencies have developed expertise in protecting the food supply from unintentional contamination.

The challenge faced is to build upon the food safety systems already in place by ensuring timely implementation of risk reduction practices. It is the intent of these guidelines to provide direction and preparedness to respond to an event, and by having plans in place to quickly recover after an incident.

Food industry employees along with regulators must be able to ensure a rapid response to food safety emergencies to protect food safety and public safety. Often these events involve close coordination with The Northern Kentucky Health Department.

This guideline is for food industry employees to be used as a reference in dealing with some of the common emergencies that can affect food safety.

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Emergency Contact Information:

- Immediate Danger: 911
- Health Department Regular Business Hours (8am-5pm): 859-341-4151
- After Hours Emergencies: 859-341-4264, option 3

This manual is not a binding set of requirements. The information provided is based on practical considerations. Please contact Northern Kentucky Health Department if you have questions or concerns in the case of an emergency involving a retail food establishment.

WATER EMERGENCY GUIDELINES

During a water supply emergency, water may serve as a source of contamination for food, equipment, utensils, and hands. Unsafe water is also a vector in the transmission of disease.

****If there is a total loss of pressure (no water) or a chemical contamination to the water supply the establishment shall close immediately (contact your local health dept)***

IN THE EVENT OF A BOIL WATER ADVISORY THE ESTABLISHMENT SHALL ASSURE THAT SAFE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING ARE IN PLACE:

- **Shut off the following:** Ice machines, drinking fountains, produce misters, bottled water refill machines, fountain drink equipment, and running water dipper wells.
- **Discard:** Ice and beverages made with contaminated water.
- **Ice:** Use only packaged ice from commercially approved facilities outside the affected area. Leave the unit off until the water advisory is lifted.
- **Water:** Use only bottled water for drinking, cooking, food preparation, and washing produce.
- **Hand Washing:** Tap water may be used for hand washing if followed with hand sanitizer.
- **Food:** Only ready-to-eat food items and commercially prepared salads in deli areas. No cutting or grinding of meat. Fruits and vegetables shall be cleaned with bottled water or water that has been boiled for 3 minutes. Pre-washed ready to eat salad mixes may be used.
- **Drinks:** Use only canned or bottled drinks. Coffee and tea shall be made from bottled water.
- **Food service operations shall be limited to the following:** Cook and serve only, and minimal cutting and slicing. Water used as an ingredient shall be boiled for 3 minutes or used of bottled water only.
- **Employee information:** Post signs or copies of the water system's health advisory. Develop a plan to notify and educate employees about water emergency procedures.
- 3 compartment sinks/sanibuckets (with a chemical sanitizer) and dishwashers (with a chemical or hot water sanitizer) may still be used.
- After the advisory is lifted, normal operations may resume. Should the water sample test positive for bacteria - turn on ALL faucets and flush for at least 5 minutes (including water fountains). Spray units or misters which spray water on products to maintain freshness shall be shut down. Leave off until emergency has been lifted. Clean and sanitize per manufacture guidelines. Empty and sanitize ice bins and sanitize equipment with water line connections. Replace any in-line filters.

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Power outage - Guidelines for potentially hazardous foods:

Be prepared before the power goes out: Keep thermometers inside all refrigeration units and freezers. Know where you can get dry ice or block ice. Have coolers on hand to keep refrigerated food cold if the power will be out for more than four hours. Make a plan to have access to a refrigerated truck if you have large amounts of food.

- Close the facility, cease all food preparation and note the time the power went out.
- Keep all refrigerator and freezer doors closed (a refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if the door is kept closed / a freezer will hold temperature for about 24-48 hours). If power is expected to be out 4 hours or more you may want to place refrigerated items into coolers full of ice until the power is restored
- Cover all cold and hot food products on buffet lines or steam tables.
- Discard any perishable foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk, eggs etc.. that have been above 41°F for two hours or more (*You cannot rely on appearance or odor to determine if its is safe!*).
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, **check each package** of food to determine its safety. If the food **still contains ice crystals** or is 41° F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.
- To discourage pilferage of unsafe food products, open packages and pour bleach on discarded products.
- Wash, rinse and sanitize all surfaces that have come in contact with unsafe food products.
- If you have returned from being evacuated and are not sure if the power was shut off and then turned back on, check with your utility company.
- *When in doubt, throw it out!*

Flood Response

Flood or sewage back-up into facility – notify local health dept and close immediately

(Follow these steps to keep your food safe during and after flood conditions)

1. **Do not serve** any food that may have come into contact with flood water.
2. **Discard any food and beverage** that is **not in a waterproof container** if there is *any* chance that it has come into contact with flood water.
 - Food containers that are waterproof include undamaged, commercially prepared foods in all-metal cans and “retort pouches” (like flexible, shelf-stable juice or seafood pouches).
 - Food containers that are *not* waterproof include those with screw-caps, snap lids, pull tops, and crimped caps.
 - Also discard cardboard juice/milk/baby formula boxes and home canned foods if they have come in contact with flood water, because they cannot be effectively cleaned and sanitized.
3. **Discard any food in damaged cans.** Damaged cans are those with swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting, or crushing/denting that is severe enough to prevent normal stacking or opening with a manual, wheel-type can opener. *See below for steps to clean/save undamaged packages.*
4. **Thoroughly wash metal pans, ceramic dishes, and utensils** (including can openers) with soap and water, using hot water if available. Rinse and then sanitize them by immersing for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented household (5.25% min. concentration) liquid bleach per gallon of water.
5. **Thoroughly wash countertops** with soap and water, using hot water if available. Rinse and then sanitize by applying a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented household (5.25% min. concentration) liquid bleach per gallon of water. Allow to air dry.

How To Save Undamaged Food Packages Exposed to Flood Water:

Undamaged, commercially prepared foods in **all-metal cans** and “**retort pouches**” (like flexible, shelf-stable juice or seafood pouches) can be saved if you follow this procedure.

1. Remove the labels, if they are the removable kind, since they can harbor dirt and bacteria.
2. Brush or wipe away any dirt or silt.
3. Thoroughly wash the cans or retort pouches with soap and water, using hot water if it is available.
4. Rinse the cans or retort pouches with water that is safe for drinking, if available, since dirt or residual soap will reduce the effectiveness of chlorine sanitation.
5. Sanitize cans and retort pouches by immersion in one of the two following ways:
 - Place in water and allow the water to come to a boil and continue boiling for 2 minutes.
 - Place in a solution of 1 cup (8 oz/250 mL) of unscented household (5.25% min. concentration) bleach mixed with 5 gallons of water and soak for 15 minutes.
6. Air dry cans or retort pouches for a minimum of 1 hour before opening or storing.
7. If the labels were removable, then re-label your cans or retort pouches, including the expiration date, with a permanent marking pen.

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Emergency Guidelines – Fire Damage

- Close the food establishment (NKY Health approval must be given before re-opening).
- Notify NKY Health who will help to determine what foods, dry goods etc. may be salvaged.
- Heat can cause jars and cans to split and crack allowing contaminants to enter.
- Smoke and chemicals from the fire and extinguishing system can penetrate Cryovac packaging, plastic wraps, and get under bottle caps or screw tops.
- All foods and beverages subject to contamination stored in permeable packaging such as cardboard, foil, paper, screw top jars or bottles, or plastic wrap shall be discarded.
- All unwrapped fruits and vegetables shall also be discarded.
- Foods in refrigerators or freezers may also be tainted by fumes since refrigerator seals are not airtight. Dispose of foods from the refrigerator or freezer if they have signs of smoke damage.
- Discard foods that were touched by firefighting chemicals. If you are not sure if the food was touched by firefighting chemicals, dispose of as a safeguard.
- Disposable single-service utensils (plastic plates, cups etc.) that were exposed to smoke and chemicals shall be discarded.
- Never taste food to determine its safety.
- Please remember that food unfit for human consumption is also unfit for pets.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

Even though a surface may look clean, chemicals from extinguishers and fine particles may be on surfaces of equipment and utensils. Cleaning and sanitizing is an important step prior to reopening.

- A professional cleaning service or restoration company may be necessary. Check with the Health Department & your insurance agent. Be sure contractors are familiar with food service operations.
- Clean and sanitize in a three-compartment sink or dishwasher.
- Wash with detergent, rinse with clear water, and sanitize items such as tables, outsides of equipment, and shelving.
- Check with manufacturer on cleaning and servicing of equipment. Some equipment, such as soda fountains or coolers, may have special cleaning requirements after a fire.
- Discard ice in both service bins and machines followed by thorough cleaning per the manufacturer's recommendations.

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