

# FOOD TALK



SANITATION TIPS FOR FOOD WORKERS

SUMMER 2009



## Would YOU Know What to Do?

Would you know what to do if your food establishment lost power today? Loss of electric power is the most frequent type of emergency in kitchens, so you need to have a plan for dealing with outages—and for natural disasters such as floods and major storms.

The experts say it's best to have plans and checklists for dealing with specific types of emergencies. Darden Restaurants developed a Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Manual, which has some really good ideas for how to cope in an emergency.

Take power failures. After you have found your emergency flashlight—which should have fresh batteries and should be with the rest of your emergency supplies (see the checklist on page 2)—turn off all electrical and gas equipment, including the circuit breakers.

Next, stop operations and move staff and guests to a well-lit area. Also, check the restrooms and stock rooms to make sure no one is trapped there in the dark.

You can keep perishable foods safe by putting them into walk-in refrigerators and then keeping the door closed. Within two hours, Darden suggests, you may bring in dry ice for the walk-in refrigerators. But be very careful. Dry ice creates carbon dioxide, which is a dangerous gas. Before entering walk-ins that contain dry ice, you must first open the doors and leave them open for 15-20 minutes to let in fresh air. Some safety experts advise not to use dry ice because of this problem. For outages that last longer than 24 hours, you may need to arrange for a refrigerated truck to store food.

Your written emergency plan should include telephone numbers for the power company and emergency services. You can call the power company to find out how long they expect the power to be out. When the power is restored, you should turn on circuit breakers and equipment one at a time, to prevent overload and equipment damage.

### Water Problems

Let's say the health department has issued a "boil water" advisory for your area. In this case, Darden advises its restaurants to:

- Turn off ice machines, water dispensers, dipper wells, coffee and tea makers and soft drink fountains. And drain and sanitize the ice bins. Then post notes on the equipment to advise the staff not to use them.
- Sanitize all food contact utensils and equipment with a 100 parts per million chlorine solution before each use. You should set up chlorine solutions at pot sinks, hand wash sinks, and all food production areas,
- Find a source of water that is fit to drink—bottled water, for example. If you must use stored water, it must be boiled for a minimum of five minutes or treated as instructed by the health department.

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## What's Next?

Do you know what to do with food after a flood or power outage? You should inspect all the food carefully before deciding to use any of it. Using potentially hazardous product to avoid wasting it is "not worth the damage it can do to your restaurant's public image if the food transmits foodborne illness," Darden says.

Generally, fire and smoke damage cause the greatest product loss. The smoke and the smell can get into almost any kind of container except canned goods. But the heat of a fire usually destroys even the canned food.

For canned items, you should throw away all bulging, leaking or dented cans—even if you cannot find a leak. Bacteria can get into a hole too small for liquids to leak out.

## Be Prepared

There are many things you can do ahead of time that can help in a crisis. For example, many establishments create an "emergency menu" with recipes for food items that do not require cooking. Your emergency menu could also include food that requires no water or very little water to

prepare, for use if your water supply is interrupted.

The Conference for Food Protection has developed an Emergency Action Plan for Retail Food Establishments. The Conference brings together experts from state and federal agencies, universities, industry and consumer groups to develop best practices and recommendations for the Food and Drug Administration. The action plan includes advice

**Using potentially hazardous product to avoid wasting it is not worth the damage it can do to your restaurant's public image.**

about what to do if the power goes out in your kitchen, or if the water supply is interrupted or becomes contaminated. It also discusses how to deal with fires, flooding, sewage back-up, infectious disease incidents—and even terrorist threats. The 51-page action plan is available online at [www.foodprotect.org](http://www.foodprotect.org).

## Disaster Checklist

### Evacuation

- Keep all exits clear.
- Are there alternative exits?
- Calmly evacuate the building. Remember to check the restrooms.
- Post your evacuation plan where all employees can see it.



### Supplies

- A flashlight with fresh batteries.
- A pen and paper.
- A battery-powered radio.
- First aid supplies.
- Emergency telephone numbers.
- A probe thermometer to monitor food temperatures during power outages.
- A 10-inch to 1-inch pipe wrench to turn off the main valve gas supply.



### Utilities

- Shut off electricity at the main breaker.
- Shut off or unplug individual equipment.
- Turnoff all water faucets and outlets.
- Shut off the gas supply at the main valve.



### Actions

- Secure all compressed air cylinders in an upright position.
- Secure or anchor all objects that could become airborne, such as knives, cutting boards, pans, bread carts etc.
- Arrange for a refrigerated truck if power is likely to be out for more than 24 hours.
- Order dry ice (If you cannot locate a refrigerated or a freezer truck).
- Check and record refrigeration and freezer temperatures, comparing the actual temperature with what it says on the exterior gauges.

*(Sources for this issue include: Darden Restaurants; the Conference for Food Protection; the Food Safety and Inspection Service; Cornell University; the National Restaurant Association.)*

## What to Keep and What to Throw Away

The following refrigerated foods should be discarded if kept above 41 degrees Fahrenheit (5 degrees Celsius) for more than two hours:

### MEAT, POULTRY SEAFOOD

- Fresh or leftover meat, poultry, fish, or seafood Discard
- Thawing meat or poultry Discard
- Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, or egg salad Discard
- Gravy, stuffing Discard
- Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef Discard
- Pizza – with any topping Discard
- Canned hams labeled “Keep refrigerated” Discard
- Canned meats, opened Discard

### CHEESE

- **Soft cheeses:** blue/blue, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, Neufchatel Discard
- **Hard cheeses:** Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, provolone, Romano Safe
- Processed Cheeses Safe
- Shredded Cheeses Discard
- Low-fat Cheeses Discard
- Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar) Safe

### DAIRY

- Milk, cream, sour cream, buttermilk, evaporated milk, yogurt Discard
- Butter, margarine Safe

### EGGS

- Fresh eggs, hard-cooked in shell, egg dishes, egg products Discard
- Custards and puddings Discard

### CASSEROLES, SOUPS, STEWS

Discard

### FRUITS

- Fresh fruits, cut Discard
- Fruit juices, opened Safe
- Canned fruits, opened Safe
- Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates Safe

### SAUCES, SPREADS, JAMS

- Opened mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish Discard  
(if above 50°F (10°C) for over eight hours)
- Peanut butter Safe
- Jelly; relish; taco; barbecue and soy sauce, mustard, catsup, olives Safe
- Worcestershire sauce Discard
- Fish sauces (oyster sauce) Discard
- Hoisin sauce Discard
- Opened vinegar-based dressings Safe
- Opened creamy-based dressings Discard
- Spaghetti sauce, opened jar Discard

### BREAD, CAKES, COOKIES, PASTA

- Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads Safe
- Cooked pasta, spaghetti Discard
- Pasta salads with mayonnaise or vinaigrette Discard
- Fresh pasta Discard
- Cheesecake Discard
- Breakfast foods – waffles, pancakes, bagels Safe

### PIES, PASTRY

- Pastries, cream filled Discard
- Pies – custard, cheese filled, or chiffon Discard
- Pies, fruit Safe

### VEGETABLES

- Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices Safe
- Greens, pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged Discard
- Vegetables, raw Safe
- Vegetables, cooked Discard
- Vegetable juice, opened Discard
- Baked potatoes Discard
- Commercial garlic in oil Discard
- Potato salad Discard

### If they were not contaminated, the following foods are safe without refrigeration:

- Margarine or butter;
- Fresh fruits and vegetables;
- Peanut butter, jams and jellies;
- Commercially prepared mayonnaise, tartar sauce or salad dressing;
- Ketchup, barbecue sauce or mustard;
- Unprepared powdered milk or dry food;
- Hard or processed cheeses.

## TAKE THE EMERGENCY QUIZ

See if you can pick the best answers to our emergency quiz. But be careful, some of them may seem to have more than one correct answer.

1. Before any emergency, you should already have:

- a. An evacuation plan.
- b. A list of emergency telephone numbers.
- c. A flashlight with fresh batteries.
- d. All of the above.

2. If your establishment loses power, you should:

- a. Stop work and go home.
- b. Turn off all electrical equipment, including circuit breakers.
- c. Run a small generator in your kitchen.
- d. None of the above.

3. If your health department issues a "boil water" advisory, you should:

- a. Use bottled water and continue as usual.
- b. Think of recipes that don't use water.
- c. Turn off the water supply and the circuit breakers for all equipment that uses water.
- d. None of the above.

4. If your area is threatened by a flood, you should:

- a. Wait until the last minute to prepare for it.
- b. Line up a supply of bottled water or a water tank truck.
- c. Shut down the establishment and go home.
- d. None of the above.

5. If there is a major fire in your establishment, you should:

- a. Expect to salvage foods stored in cans or in freezers.
- b. Expect to throw out all food.
- c. Prepare your emergency recipes.
- d. None of the above.

6. If there is a sewage backup in your establishment, you should:

- a. Keep serving using single service utensils.
- b. Not let customers use the restrooms.
- c. Prepare your emergency recipes.
- d. Throw out any food that may have come in contact with sewage.

Answers: 1. d; 2 b; 3. b; 4. b; 5. b; 6. d.

