



Preparing for a Tornado or Strong Damaging Winds

The first concern during a storm that may bring high winds or tornadoes is for personal safety for the customers and employees within your establishment. A severe storm may cause one or more imminent health hazards in addition to structural damage from winds such as power outages, interruptions in water service, flooding, fires, or other threats to the safety of your establishment's food supply.

The following information will assist you in developing a plan to prepare for and respond to damage from a tornado or strong winds in your establishment. While not required for an Emergency Preparedness Plan accepted by the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS), it is highly recommended that your establishment have procedures in place for tornadoes or other severe wind events.

PLAN AND ACT NOW

- ☐ Develop a safety plan for the occupants of your establishment during severe weather advisories such as:
 - o During a tornado warning – a tornado has been sighted or picked up on radar
 - stop operations
 - help customers and employees find shelter away from windows and in an enclosed area
 - stay away from large, unattached items such as refrigerators
 - stay informed of weather advisories through the radio, TV, or phone alerts
 - o During high-wind situations – damaging, high-velocity winds have been reported in the area. Potential risks include downed power lines, flying debris, wind-blown heavy objects, and broken glass.
 - stop operations
 - follow the directions as you would for a tornado warning
 - o During a tornado watch – conditions are favorable for the development of a tornado
 - continue normal operations but be alert for changing weather conditions and stay informed of weather advisories

WHEN STORM DAMAGE OR AN IMMINENT HEALTH HAZARD OCCURS

Exercise caution before entering or moving around if entrapped in a storm-damaged building.

Determine the Safety of Your Facility and Operating Conditions

- ☐ Call 911 if entrapped in the building or the power lines are down.
- ☐ If there is significant damage or another imminent health hazard exists, do not conduct any food-related operations including food preparation and handling, warewashing, and cleaning.
- ☐ Establishments with a BCHS-accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan may implement their plan for operating during an extended power outage and/or interruption in water service **if and only if** no other imminent health hazard exists.
- ☐ Notify the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) at www.houstonconsumer.org, chs@houstontx.gov or (832) 393-5100 of the closure or implementation of a BCHS-accepted plan.

- ☐ Contact the Houston Permitting Center at (832) 394-8810 to determine if plan review/ building permits are required for replacement of large floor-mounted equipment, repairs, or replacement of interior surfaces, and repairs, replacement, or remodeling of the facility's structure. Refer to [Recovering from Flood and/or Structural Damage](#) for details and more contact information.
- ☐ Refer to your [Emergency Contacts](#) to call utility companies, repairmen, insurance companies, etc.
- ☐ Ensure employees are wearing PPE (Employee Safety) to guard against injury from broken glass and debris if entering the establishment.
- ☐ If cleanup begins before a health officer arrives, document the type and pounds of food discarded and the method of disposal.

Assess Food and Non-Food Items

- ☐ Look closely for glass fragments, some not clearly visible, that may have pierced food packaging or lodged deeply into food and other items. Be extremely cautious with:
 - o Any unopened package or food, including ice and beverages
 - o Porous food packaged in fabric, plastic or paper bags, or cardboard cartons
 - o Fruits and vegetables
 - o Disposable dishware and utensils
 - o Filters, purifiers, and beverage cartridges attached to equipment
- ☐ Discard all suspect foods and single-service articles according to [Proper Disposal of Contaminated Food](#).

When in Doubt, Throw it Out!

Clean and Sanitize

Do not clean the facility and equipment if the water supply is not potable (safe), the wastewater system is not functioning, and/or electricity is unavailable for heating water and providing sufficient lighting for cleaning.

- ☐ Determine whether the water, wastewater, and electrical systems are operational.
- ☐ Thoroughly vacuum floors and seating areas to ensure removal of hard-to-see glass shards. Double-bag vacuumed waste before discarding.
- ☐ Wash and rinse furniture and floors.
- ☐ Wash, rinse, and sanitize all food-contact surfaces, work stations, utensils, dishes, silverware, and glassware.

Expect Pests

- ☐ Confirm that any pest management company you use is licensed.
- ☐ Ensure that any rodents/pests that may have entered the facility are no longer present.
- ☐ Expect to replace traps, bait stations, and treatments that may have been displaced or damaged and to add more pest control equipment to minimize the invasion of pests.
- ☐ Remove dead pests and their droppings and sanitize any food-contact surfaces that may have come in contact with them.
- ☐ Dispose of contaminated or spoiled solid foods in closed containers to prevent rodent and fly harborage.

- ☐ Seal all openings into the facility to prevent future entry of pests or rodents.
- ☐ Clear trash and debris immediately in and around the establishment (downed tree limbs, cardboard boxes, broken sheetrock, old equipment, and any other damaged materials).
- ☐ Keep grass short and cut. Remove dense brush and shrubbery.

PREPARE TO REOPEN

Meet the Requirements for Resuming Operations

Refer to the [Requirements to Resume Normal Operations](#).

Contact BCHS at www.houstonconsumer.org or chs@houstontx.gov :

- ☐ To request approval to resume normal operations once the requirements are met.

OR

To request a pre-opening inspection if permits and approval were needed from the Houston Permitting Center.

THE BUREAU OF CONSUMER HEALTH SERVICES MUST GRANT APPROVAL FOR YOUR ESTABLISHMENT TO RESUME FOOD OPERATIONS.

Please contact the Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) with any questions or concerns

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