



What to Do After a Fire

A fire can result in the contamination of food, equipment, utensils, linens, and single-service articles from smoke, heat, water, soot and chemicals as well as cause extensive structural or equipment damage.

THINK SAFETY

First Steps

- ☐ Do not enter the establishment until the fire department has cleared the building for re-entry.
- ☐ Close the establishment and discontinue all food-related operations including food preparation, food handling, and equipment/utensil cleaning.
- ☐ 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.
- ☐ Contact the Houston Permitting Center at (832) 394-8810; 1002 Washington, Houston, 77002; 8 AM - 4:30 PM when replacing large floor-mounted equipment, repairing or replacing interior surfaces, or repairing, replacing, or remodeling the facility's structure. Refer to [Recovering from Flood and/or Structural Damage](#).
- ☐ Ensure your employees are protected during cleanup or hire a professional fire restoration company.
- ☐ If employees are involved in the cleanup, follow the procedures below for personal protection, food assessment and disposal, and cleanup.
- ☐ If cleanup begins before a BCHS health officer arrives, document the type and pounds of food discarded and the method of disposal.
- ☐ Ensure a food establishment manager or the person in charge is responsible for consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

Protect your Employees if Employees are Involved in the Cleanup

- ☐ Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as:
 - o Eye protection
 - o Rubber boots and gloves that can be washed and disinfected after use.
 - o Protective clothing such as coveralls, long-sleeved shirts and long pants, or disposable outerwear
- ☐ Provide last-minute training for your employees to:
 - o Properly wear PPE
 - o Immediately report any injuries or exposures to the person in charge
 - o Remove protective gloves, footwear, and clothing before walking between contaminated areas and other areas of the establishment
 - o Adhere to double handwashing procedures immediately after working in contaminated areas followed by a hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol)
 - o Clean and disinfect hand sinks and faucets after use to prevent transferring contamination to others

- o Follow OSHA rules for handling detergents, sanitizers, and other chemicals used in the cleaning process. ***Never use bleach in a closed space. Open windows and doors first.***

DISCARD, CLEAN, AND SANITIZE

Assess Food and Non-Food Items

- ☐ Empty out cabinets, pantries, drawers, refrigerators/freezers. Smoke and soot can seep through closed doors.
- ☐ Refer to the [Food and Equipment Salvage Chart](#) to assess food and non-food items that were affected by smoke, heat, soot, chemicals, water to extinguish the fire, and/or the lack of proper refrigeration.
- ☐ Record (and photograph) the type and amount of foods to be discarded and the reason for disposal. Keep the documents for insurance and health inspection purposes.
- ☐ Distressed foods may be sold or donated to a licensed food salvage establishment if the food salvage company is permitted under the provisions of Chapter 432 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

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.
- ☐ Clean all food and non- areas (floors, walls, shelves, hard surfaces, hardware) affected by the fire, including those affected by smoke and water.
- ☐ Then wash, rinse, sanitize, and air dry all food-contact surfaces and equipment.
- ☐ Check rubber gasket seals around appliance doors for any signs of damage and be sure to clean condenser coils on the back of the refrigeration equipment.
- ☐ Use air purifiers, ozone generators, ionizers, and other deep cleaning equipment to remove smoke and soot or refer to a professional restoration company.

MANAGE WASTE

Dispose of Waste Properly

- ☐ Refer to Proper Disposal of Contaminated Food for:
 - o Identification and Separation of temperature-abused and contaminated food
 - o Methods for handling small and large volumes of food
 - o How additional waste will be handled

PREPARE TO REOPEN

- ☐ Meet the Requirements to Resume Normal Operations.
 - ☐ Contact BCHS at www.houstonconsumer.org or chs@houstontx.gov
 - o To request approval to resume normal operations once the requirements are met
- OR**

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

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

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