



HOUSTON HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT

# Emergency Preparedness Plan Application Guide

# Purpose

To provide guidelines for food establishments to develop an individualized action plan for preparing for and responding to disasters and other emergencies



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# Emergency Preparedness Application and Guide Explained

## What the Application is:

The application for an Emergency Preparedness Plan is a template that walks you through filling in essential information necessary for preparing for, operating safely during, and recovering from an extended power outage or interruption in water service. Once the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) accepts the plan, the establishment will be allowed to continue food operations during an extended power outage or interruption in water service according to the procedures set out by the plan. Upon acceptance by BCHS, the template along with the required attachments may serve as the establishment's actual emergency preparedness plan.

## What the Guide is:

The Emergency Preparedness Planning Guide in this document provides easy-to-follow guidelines and checklists to assist you in developing your plan and completing the template for preparing for and operating during a power or water outage. Although BCHS does not review plans for other types of disasters and common emergencies such as floods and sewage backups, it is highly recommended that you develop plans for them as well. (Refer to the [Emergency Preparedness Toolbox](#).)

## Why an Emergency Preparedness Plan is Important:

Following a written emergency preparedness plan that meets the criteria established by BCHS will allow an establishment to:

- operate during an extended loss of power or water service
- speed up the ability to resume normal operations following an imminent health hazard
- provide safe food to the community when food resources may be limited
- prevent costly correction of unapproved or improper repairs or replacement to a facility's structure or equipment

## Why Plans Should be Submitted to BCHS:

"Acceptance" of an establishment's plan ensures that critical food safety and sanitation arrangements are provided for long-term disruptions in power and water service. Establishments with accepted plans will be considered lower risk for causing foodborne illness and therefore will become low priority for food safety inspections immediately after a disaster. However, these establishments may receive a phone call to determine their operating status and conditions and may be visited if assistance is needed or if any concerns arise.

## How Do I Submit My Emergency Preparedness Plan?

Once the template for your establishment's plan is completed, mail or email it along with the required documents and the Bureau of Consumer Health Services Emergency Preparedness Plan Submission Form to BCHS for review. Plans can be submitted any time throughout the year but need to be submitted by March

31st for acceptance by the start of hurricane season on June 1st.

### **What if My Establishment Already Has a Plan?**

- Compare your establishment's/chain's plan to the Emergency Preparedness Checklist.
- Provide the page number in your plan in your plan that pertains to each of the required criteria. E-mail the following completed items to ([CHS@houstontx.gov](mailto:CHS@houstontx.gov)):
  - the highlighted plan
  - a completed Emergency Preparedness Checklist
  - a completed Bureau of Consumer Health Services Emergency Preparedness Plan Submission Form

### **What if My Establishment Plans to Close during an Extended Power/Water Outage ?**

Simply complete the Bureau of Consumer Health Services Emergency Preparedness Plan Submission Form, check the agreement box for ceasing food operations during any imminent health hazard then sign, date, and e-mail/mail the form to BCHS.

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# COVID-19

During a disaster or emergency retail food establishments should continue to follow best practices, including specific guidelines for coronavirus, to help prevent the spread of disease transmission among employees and customers. The following state and federal resources have been developed specifically for food establishments and should be used in conjunction with any governmental mandates to slow the community spread of COVID-19.

## **CDC**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/business-employers/bars-restaurants.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/grocery-food-retail-workers.html>

## **Texas Department of State Health Services**

<https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/opentexas.aspx#protocols>

<https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/business.aspx>

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## Definitions

**Certified Food Manager** an individual who holds current certification in food safety from the City of Houston Health Department or holds a Texas accredited or ANSI (American National Standards Institute) equivalent of food manager certification

**Disinfect** to destroy micro-organisms and bacterial spores on a cleaned surface

**Food-Related Operations** food preparation, food handling, cleaning of all food-contact surfaces (food equipment and utensils/tableware), and cleaning of the premises (dining, restrooms, food preparation, and storage areas)

**Imminent Health Hazard** a likely health hazard due to an emergency, such as a fire, flood, power outage, sewage water backflow, extended interruption of electrical or water service, misuse of poisonous or toxic materials, onset of an apparent foodborne disease outbreak, gross unsanitary occurrence or condition, or a similar event that might result in the contamination of food, or that might prevent time/temperature controlled for safety (TCS) food from being held at required temperatures. (City of Houston Food Ordinance Ch. 20.21.2(d))

**Person In Charge** the individual present in a food establishment who is the apparent supervisor of the establishment at the time of the inspection

**Ready-To-Eat** food in a form that is edible without additional food preparation to achieve food safety

**Salvage Establishments** establishments that recondition foods subjected to abnormal environmental conditions such as temperature extremes, smoke, water, or fumes. Food salvage establishments must be permitted under the provisions of Chapter 432 of the Texas Health and Safety Code

**Sanitize** to reduce the number of bacteria on a cleaned food-contact surface to safe levels by using chemicals or heat

**TCS Food** food that must be time and temperature controlled to avoid rapid growth of bacteria

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## Acronyms

<b>BCHS</b>	Bureau of Consumer Health Services
<b>CDC</b>	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<b>CFM</b>	Certified Food Manager
<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency
<b>HHD</b>	Houston Health Department
<b>PIC</b>	Person in Charge
<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment (mask, eye protection, gloves, etc.)
<b>TCS</b>	Time and Temperature Control for Safety

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# **Emergency Preparedness Plan**

## **Checklist**

**for**

## **Extended Power Outages and Interruptions in Water Service**





## Emergency Preparedness Checklist

Emergency Preparedness Plan Checklist pg. 1 of 2			
Establishment No.:			
Establishment Name:			
Address:			
Item	Included	N/A	Comments
<b>General</b>			
When to close establishment; position(s) responsible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Contact BCHS regarding operating status; position(s) responsible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Checklist for returning to normal operating status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Structural safety of facility addressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Contact information for service/repairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Additional supplies to stock/order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Instructions for employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Food Safety Arrangements</b>			
Methods for safe storage of TCS* food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Method to monitor temperature of TCS food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Thermometers in every refrigeration unit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Emergency menu or plan to sell non-TCS food only	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Identification and disposal of temperature-abused food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Identification and disposal of food and ice made with potentially contaminated water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Water-Related Arrangements</b>			
Alternate approved source(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Hot water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Plan for cleaning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Equipment washing with test strips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Emergency Preparedness Plan Checklist pg. 2 of 2

Establishment Name:

Item	Included	N/A	Comments
Use of single-service articles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Hand sink setups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Working toilets with hand sink setup	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Facility Arrangements</b>			
Lighting for food preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ventilation for cooking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Solid waste disposal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Segregation of contaminated items	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Cleaning Contaminated Areas</b>			
Cleaning affected equipment after a power outage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Cleaning and flushing equipment after an interruption in water service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Cleaning and flushing equipment after the lifting of a boil water notice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

\*TCS food – time and time control for safety

### Have you attached the following?

- ☐ Emergency menu for power outage (unless plan indicates only non-TCS food will be served or sold)
- ☐ Emergency menu for an interruption in water service (unless menu is the same menu used for power outages or unless plan indicates only non-TCS food will be served or sold)
- ☐ Detailed list of emergency duties, responsibilities, and instructions during an extended power outage and interruption in water service for each employee position
- ☐ Plans how the facility will be secured
- ☐ Example of how the type and amount of food to be discarded and the method of disposal will be documented

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## After the Plan is Accepted by BCHS\*

### ACTIONS TO TAKE

- ☐ Ensure every employee knows where to find the plan.
- ☐ Print a hard copy of the plan for use when the Internet or power is out.
- ☐ Make the plan part of training for old and new hires.
- ☐ Review the plan on an annual basis and update as needed.
- ☐ E-mail revised plans with the updates highlighted to [chs@houston.tx.gov](mailto:chs@houston.tx.gov)

### When A Storm is Headed to the Houston Area

- ☐ Review your BCHS-Accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan with all staff.
- ☐ Begin preparations as indicated in the establishment's plan.
- ☐ Ensure all managers or persons in charge (PICs) know to notify BCHS at [chs@houston.tx.gov](mailto:chs@houston.tx.gov) when the establishment:
  - Closes due to an imminent health hazard
  - Begins implementing its Emergency Preparedness Plan or is resuming normal operations
- ☐ E-mail or call BCHS with any food safety questions or concerns.

### After the Storm

- ☐ Notify [chs@houston.tx.gov](mailto:chs@houston.tx.gov) of the establishment's operational status - (closure due to an imminent health hazard; operating under the BCHS-Accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan; resuming normal operating conditions).
- ☐ Follow the plan as applicable to the situation (no power and/or no safe/hot water).
- ☐ Refer to the [Emergency Response and Recovery Toolbox](#) for cleaning up and restoring the establishment after flooding or structural damage, if applicable.
- ☐ E-mail BCHS at [CHS@houston.tx.gov](mailto:CHS@houston.tx.gov) with any food safety or clean up questions or concerns. E-mails will be monitored before and after the storm.

### When Operations are Back to Normal

- ☐ Evaluate the effectiveness of the plan to determine if any improvements are needed for the next power outage/interruption in water service or other disaster.
- ☐ Update the plan and submit any changes to BCHS for approval prior to March 31st of the upcoming year.
- ☐ Retrain staff as needed.

***\*Plans become invalid upon a change in ownership and must be resubmitted by the new owner.***

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# **Guide**

## **to**

# **Emergency Preparedness Planning for Extended Power Outages and Interruptions in Water Service**





## Developing a BCHS-Accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan

The following information will be needed when completing the application for extended power and water outages. The information can also be used with specific procedures for floods, sewage backups, tornadoes, and fires.

### EMPLOYEES

#### Employee Positions and Their Responsibilities

- ☐ List key positions that are “critical” and the tasks they must perform.
- ☐ Identify a manager or person in charge (PIC) responsible for:
- ☐ Assessing the establishment after the event to determine whether an imminent health hazard (extended power or water outage, flooding, structural damage, etc.) exists and all food operations (food preparation, food handling, warewashing, and cleaning of the premises) must cease or whether operations can be safely resumed
  - Notifying the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) at [www.houstonconsumer.org](http://www.houstonconsumer.org) , [chs@houstontx.gov](mailto:chs@houstontx.gov) or 832-393-5100 regarding the establishment’s operational status:
    - Operating under a BCHS-accepted plan and returning to normal operations after using an accepted plan for an extended power or water outage
  - OR**
  - Closed or needing the required approval to resume normal operations after being closed
  - Contacting the Houston Permitting Center (832) 394-8810 to obtain permits and receive approval to replace large, floor-mounted equipment, restore interior surfaces, and/or repair, reconstruct, or remodel the facility’s structure
- ☐ Create an updated list of critical contacts and phone numbers (refer to Emergency Contacts for an example of an emergency contact list).

#### Communication

- ☐ Provide multiple forms of communication as cell phones, land lines, and/or computers may not work.
- ☐ Use texting, Facebook, Twitter, etc. to access BCHS and other governmental sites for disaster information.
- ☐ Use texting to communicate with employees as Wi-Fi and Internet connections may be down.

#### Employee Safety

- ☐ Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) if employees are involved in cleanup activities.
- ☐ Develop training for employees to:
  - Understand the importance of wearing PPE
  - Immediately report any injuries or exposures during cleanup to the person in charge
  - Follow procedures for safely removing mold, wearing a properly fitted filtration mask that carries the N-95 designation from NIOSH (National Institutes of Occupational Health and

Safety) or use a mold remediation specialist

- Remove protective gloves, footwear, and clothing before walking between contaminated areas and other areas of the establishment
- Adhere to double handwashing procedures followed by a hand antiseptic immediately after working in contaminated areas
- Clean and disinfect hand sinks and faucets after use to prevent transferring contamination to others
- Follow OSHA rules for handling detergents, sanitizers, and other chemicals used in the cleaning process

## GENERAL DISASTER ARRANGEMENTS

### Additional Arrangements and Supplies

- ☐ Develop plans for:
  - Protecting the facility (securing indoor and outdoor objects, etc.)
  - Operating with/without artificial light
  - Ventilation for cooking
- ☐ Make arrangements for obtaining:
  - Items needed to protect and monitor refrigerated food - dry ice, ice, plastic tarps, insulated covers, blankets, quilts, and/or newspapers to cover refrigerated or frozen foods in chest-type units; signs; tape; additional thermometers, etc.
  - Items for hand sink setups – gravity type water dispenser, catch basin, soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, etc.
  - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - eye protection, rubber boots, and gloves that can be cleaned and disinfected after use; outer protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts and pants or disposable outer wear; properly fitted filtration masks with the N-95 designation NIOSH if removing mold
  - Cleaning supplies - tools, cleaners, disinfectant, trash bags, etc.
  - Additional single-service articles (disposable plates, utensils, cups, etc.).
  - Pest control – replacement and/or additional traps, glue boards, etc.

### Menu

- ☐ Develop an emergency menu consisting of a limited number of recipes that involves:
  - Little water
  - Minimal food preparation
  - Cook-serve or no-cook operations
  - No bare hand contact with any food. *This includes operations with approved bare hand contact policies in place.*

### Waste Disposal (Refer to Proper Disposal of Contaminated Food)

- ☐ Include the following in your plan:
  - Documentation (and photographs) of the type and amount of food to be discarded and the method of disposal. Location where documents will be stored for review by insurance and health officials
  - Identification and separation of temperature-abused and contaminated food from food storage and preparation areas until items can be removed from premises

- Method for handling small volumes of food that are denatured or destroyed before placing in an outside closed, sealed container
- Method for handling large volumes of food that will be held if waste disposal service is interrupted
- Agreement with waste disposal company to have additional waste disposal bins delivered onsite
- Agreement with salvaging company [licensed by the State of Texas](#) if salvaging is anticipated (for food service operations that may have large quantities of salvageable food items)

## PREPARATION FOR POWER AND WATER OUTAGES

- Refer to the following documents, [Preparing for a Power Outage of 4 or More Hours](#) and [Preparing for an Interruption in Water Service or a Boil Water Notice](#) to develop specific procedures for the two events as you complete your application.





# Power Outages





## Preparing for a Power Outage of 4 or More Hours

During a power outage, the primary concern is food requiring **Time and Temperature Control for Safety**, commonly called TCS food. At improper temperatures, TCS food could become unsafe and lead to **foodborne illness**. In general, if the power is out for less than four hours, food kept in a refrigerator or freezer should be safe as long as the food temperatures were at or below 41°F to begin with and the appliance doors remain closed as much as possible.

The following information will assist you in completing the [Preparation for Power Outages](#) section in the application for a BCHS-accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan.

### PLAN AND ACT NOW

#### List and Prioritize Equipment

- ☐ List the equipment that will be impacted by a power outage (refrigeration systems, ice makers, food/beverage dispensing systems, cooking/heating equipment, dishwashing machines, sensor handwashing sinks, hand dryers, heating and air conditioning, water heaters, security systems, computers, cash registers, lighting, etc.).
- ☐ Prioritize the equipment to be powered by an alternate power source (generators, battery operated fixtures).
- ☐ Develop alternatives to equipment that will not be powered by a generator or batteries.

#### Plan for Adequate Refrigeration

- ☐ Examine all refrigerator and freezer door gaskets and any display window seals and replace/repair as needed.
- ☐ Ensure all refrigerators and freezers have a working thermometer.
- ☐ Consider installing thermometers and alarms on refrigeration equipment to notify designated staff when the temperature has reached an unsafe level and to help the staff monitor how long the food has been exposed to those temperatures.
- ☐ Arrange to monitor unit temperatures a minimum of every four hours during a power outage and determine where the data will be stored. *Record time the power went out.*
- ☐ Arrange for one or more alternate means of refrigeration or preserving refrigeration to keep food at ≤41°F:
  - Generator and fuel
  - A refrigerated truck that can be delivered in an emergency (Provide totes for storing food)
  - A refrigerated warehouse that has a backup generator (Keep food cold during transfer)
  - Dry ice blocks placed in refrigerators/freezers

#### Generators

**CAUTION: Only use generators outdoors and keep away from windows, doors, and air vents. Individuals must be specifically trained to operate the generators as large amounts of carbon**

*monoxide can build up to dangerous levels in minutes.*

***Houston Public Works, (832) 394-8810/8820, must give approval to connect the generator to the establishment's power supply.***

- ☐ Determine equipment to be operated by a generator. Take into account the capacity of the generator as it may not be able to operate all critical equipment such as refrigeration and freezer units, cooking equipment, etc. Consider additional generators that can be transported to the facility in an emergency. Make a plan to refuel generators during long term power outages

### **Dry Ice**

***CAUTION: Dry ice can cause serious injury if not handled properly. Dry ice should be handled only by trained workers. Refer to the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for dry ice for personal protective equipment requirements, ventilation, exposure controls, and handling practices.***

- ☐ Use tongs or insulated gloves when handling dry ice to avoid tissue damage.
- ☐ Allow 2 to 2 ½ pounds of dry ice per cubic foot of freezer space.
- ☐ Do not lock freezer or cover air vents.
- ☐ Place boards or heavy cardboard on top of packages then place dry ice on top of the boards. In upright freezers, place dry ice on each shelf.
- ☐ Pack food tightly with dry ice to keep food frozen longer. Use blankets or crumpled newspaper to fill empty spaces.

### **Refrigeration Units Not Operated by a Generator**

- ☐ Monitor and record refrigeration temperatures and times in the warmest part of the unit. Use thermometers mounted outside the unit when possible to minimize opening doors.
- ☐ Use tape and signs to keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- ☐ Transfer food from upright and display cases to the walk-in cooler and freezer keeping products close together to hold cold temperatures longer.
- ☐ Cover food with plastic or canvas tarps, blankets, quilts, and/or newspapers.
- ☐ Freeze any refrigerated foods that will not be needed immediately (meats, dairy products, leftovers, etc.). This can extend the time these foods remain below 41° F.
- ☐ Use ice or ice baths to rapidly cool small batches of food for refrigeration. Do not place hot foods in refrigerators or freezers as this will rapidly raise the temperature inside these units to unsafe levels.
- ☐ Organize the freezer compartment to minimize contamination from meat and poultry juices in the event of a thaw.
- ☐ Add extra ice and frozen containers of water to freezers and coolers to keep cold temperatures longer.
- ☐ Turn freezers and refrigerators to lowest temperature setting. Full freezers will keep cold temperatures longer.

### **Don't Forget Ventilation**

- ☐ Do not cook if mechanical ventilation is not available to remove smoke, steam, or grease.

**OR**

Limit menu items to those that do not cause grease buildup and condensation on walls, ceilings, and ventilation equipment.

## Anticipate Lighting Needs

***Sufficient lighting is required to properly perform food safety-related tasks such as food preparation, food handling, warewashing, and cleaning the premises.***

- ☐ Install additional emergency lighting that will remain on during a power outage.
- ☐ Artificial light may be available if using a generator or other lighting source such as battery-operated fixtures.
- ☐ Restrict operations to procedures that can be safely conducted using alternative lighting.
- ☐ Operations may be conducted during daylight hours without artificial light if sufficient natural light is available.

## Plan for Dishwashing

- ☐ If the power outage affects the hot water heater:
  - Cease washing of all multi-use tableware and use single-service articles.
  - Cease food preparation. Only previously prepared ready-to-eat and prepackaged food may be served or sold.

**OR**

Heat water on gas stove for cleaning food preparation equipment and utensils, if feasible.

## WHEN THE POWER GOES OUT

- ☐ Document date and time the power went out. The “food safety time clock” starts ticking when the power goes out.
- ☐ If the power is out for more than four hours:
  - Implement the establishment’s Emergency Preparedness Plan accepted by the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) using an alternate power source(s) **if and only if** no imminent health hazard exists with the implementation and operation of the plan.
  - If unable to implement your establishment’s accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan, **CLOSE THE ESTABLISHMENT** and discontinue food preparation, food handling, warewashing, and cleaning operations. Discard food products that were in the process of being cooked but had not yet reached final temperature.
- ☐ **Notify** the **Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS)** if your establishment is operating under its accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan or if your establishment has ceased operations due to an imminent health hazard at [www.houstonconsumer.org](http://www.houstonconsumer.org), [chs@houstontx.gov](mailto:chs@houstontx.gov) or 832-393-5100.

## WHEN THE POWER COMES BACK ON

### First Steps

- ☐ Note date and time power is restored.
- ☐ Reset circuit breakers.
- ☐ Verify that:
  - All refrigeration equipment can consistently maintain cold holding temperatures of  $\leq 41^{\circ}\text{F}$  or is in a frozen state before food is placed in the units.
  - Cooking equipment can heat to  $165^{\circ}\text{F}$  for raw animal foods.
  - Hot holding units can maintain  $\geq 135^{\circ}\text{F}$ .
  - Ventilation for cooking equipment is operating properly.
  - Water and booster heaters are heating adequately for manual warewashing ( $110^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) and mechanical warewashing with a hot water sanitizing rinse ( $180^{\circ}\text{F}$ ).

## Assess All TCS Food

- ☐ Examine all TCS food for time and temperature abuse using your time and temperature logs and a calibrated thermometer.
- ☐ Cold Holding:
  - **Discard** refrigerated food if the temperature exceeded  $41^{\circ}\text{F}$  for more than four hours.
  - **Discard** frozen food that thawed and exceeded  $41^{\circ}\text{F}$  for more than four hours.
  - **Refrigerate** previously frozen food that has not exceeded  $41^{\circ}\text{F}$  for more than four hours or cook immediately.
  - **Cool** foods within one hour to  $\leq 41^{\circ}\text{F}$  if the temperature exceeded  $41^{\circ}\text{F}$  for less than four hours or cook immediately.
  - **Discard** any refrigerated or frozen food that has deteriorated in quality or has an unusual color, appearance, or odor.
- ☐ Hot Holding:
  - **Discard** foods held at  $\leq 135^{\circ}\text{F}$  for more than four hours.
  - If held at  $\leq 135^{\circ}\text{F}$  for less than two hours, **rapidly reheat** the following foods within two hours:
    - commercially pre-cooked foods to  $135^{\circ}\text{F}$
    - all other TCS food to  $165^{\circ}\text{F}$

***When in doubt, throw it out! Temperature-abused food may cause foodborne illness.***

## Clean Up

- ☐ Clean and sanitize equipment and utensils, including ice bins where ice melted during the power outage and refrigerators/freezers that contained spoiled food.

## PREPARE TO REOPEN

### Meet the Requirements for Resuming Operations\*\*\*

- ☐ Refer to the Requirements to Resume Normal Operations.

### Contact BCHS at [www.houstonconsumer.org](http://www.houstonconsumer.org) or [chs@houstontx.gov](mailto:chs@houstontx.gov)

- ☐ For approval to open if your establishment did not follow a BCHS-accepted plan for a loss of power.  
**OR**  
If your establishment closed due to another imminent health hazard.

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

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- ☐ **If and only if** your establishment followed a BCHS-accepted plan for a power outage :
- Normal operations may be resumed once the requirements are met.
  - Notify BCHS that normal operations are being resumed.

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

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# Water Service Interruptions and Boil Water Notices





## Preparing for an Interruption in Water Service or a Boil Water Notice

All food-related operations are affected when no water, no hot water of at least 110°F at 3-compartment sinks, or just a small stream or trickle of water comes out of faucets or when your establishment is under a Boil Water Notice for potentially contaminated water. An interruption in water service (a lack of hot and cold running water under pressure for more than one hour) or a potentially unsafe water supply impacts all uses of water - consumption, handwashing, food preparation, warewashing, and cleaning of the premises.

The following information will assist you in completing the Preparation for an Interruption in Water Service or Boil Water Notice section in the application for a BCHS-accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan.

### PLAN AND ACT NOW

#### List All Water-Use Equipment and Plan for Water Needs

- ☐ Identify the location of the shut-off valve at the water main and provide instructions for shutting off the valve during an interruption in water service or a Boil Water Notice.
- ☐ List equipment and fixtures that use water. (Sinks, warewashing equipment, ice makers, beverage mixing/dispensing machines, toilets, etc.)
- ☐ Determine how much water is needed to operate essential equipment and fixtures as well as to prepare an emergency food menu.
- ☐ List all machines with water line connections that will need to be disconnected.
- ☐ Arrange for one or more of the following approved water sources:
  - Water hauled from a commercial drinking water refill station or other approved public water supply (not affected by a Boil Water Notice) using covered, food-grade containers
  - Commercially bottled drinking water
  - Water brought to a rolling boil for at least two minutes
  - Other arrangement approved by the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) and Houston Public Works (832) 394-8810/8820

#### Alter Food/Drink Preparation and Service Activities

- ☐ Develop and implement an emergency menu that requires minimal water and food preparation and limited equipment/utensil washing.
- ☐ Wash/rinse fruits and vegetables with an approved water source or obtain and use prewashed prepackaged produce.
- ☐ Suspend bare hand contact with all food. This includes operations with approved bare hand contact policies.
- ☐ Disconnect machines with water line connections (post-mix beverage machines, juicers, spray misters,



steam kettles, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashing machines, etc.).

- ☐ Use only commercially manufactured ice.
- ☐ Use single-service articles

## Plan for Handwashing

***Running water from an approved source is required.***

- ☐ Provide at least one of the acceptable alternatives for handwashing listed below:
  - Handwashing setup using a clean, sanitized container with a continuous flow spigot that allows water to flow over the hands into a catch bucket
    - empty catch bucket into a working drain such as a mop sink or toilet
    - hands must be washed after emptying the catch bucket and before returning to food preparation
  - Portable handwashing station with running water
- ☐ For either handwashing arrangement above:
  - Provide dispensable hand soap, disposable towels, and a waste receptacle at handwashing stations.

**AND**

Keep disposable gloves and hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) for use after washing hands.

***Stop all food preparation if no alternative handwashing facilities can be set up.***

***Only prepackaged food may be sold/served.***

***Approved hand sanitizers must be used for hand cleaning.***

## Make Arrangements for Working Toilets

- ☐ Provide an acceptable alternative:
  - Portable flushing toilet with portable handwashing setup on the outside premises and a handwashing setup inside the facility. Ensure transporters of toilet waste have a current transporter permit with the Houston Health Department to haul toilet waste.
  - Water dumped into toilet for flushing if water is available and a working handwashing station is nearby
- ☐ Other arrangements (including the use of porta-cans) must be approved by BCHS.

***Stop all operations including the sale of prepackaged food if no working toilets are available.***

## Plan for Cleaning and No or Minimal Dishwashing Operations

- ☐ Use only water from an approved supply for cleaning purposes.
  - ☐ Cease washing of all multi-use tableware and use single-service articles.
  - ☐ Heat water from an approved supply on gas stove to 110° F for cleaning food preparation equipment and utensils, if possible.
- OR**
- Cease food preparation. Only previously prepared ready-to-eat and prepackaged food may be served or sold.

## WHEN WATER SERVICE IS INTERRUPTED OR A BOIL WATER NOTICE IS ISSUED

- ☐ Call the City of Houston Help line (311) to report no water or no running water under pressure and to determine the estimated length of interruption.
- ☐ Call a plumber and stop food preparation and cleaning operations if there is no hot water.
- ☐ Implement your establishment's BCHS-Accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan for an interruption in water service for more than one hour or a Boil Water Notice **if and only if** no imminent health hazard exists with the implementation and operation of the plan or cease all food-related operations such as food preparation, food handling, warewashing, and cleaning.
- ☐ Notify BCHS of the closure or if your establishment is operating under its accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan at [www.houstonconsumer.org](http://www.houstonconsumer.org), [chs@houstontx.gov](mailto:chs@houstontx.gov), or 832-393-5100.

### Additional Actions to be Taken When a Boil Water Notice is Issued

- ☐ Post signs or copies of the Boil Water Notice.
- ☐ Stop making ice.
- ☐ Discard all ready-to-eat foods stored on potentially contaminated ice.
- ☐ Discard all food and ice made with potentially contaminated water.
- ☐ Listen for public service announcements lifting the Boil Water Notice.

## WHEN WATER SERVICE IS RESTORED OR THE BOIL WATER NOTICE IS LIFTED

### Flush Equipment and Clean Up

- ☐ For a loss in water service:
  - Flush all pipes in the facility by running every hot and cold water faucet for at least two minutes or until the water is clear.
  - Then clean and sanitize faucet screens.
- ☐ For a Boil Water Notice:
  - First run every hot water faucet for five minutes.
  - Then run every cold water faucet for five minutes.
  - Then clean and sanitize faucet screens.
- ☐ Flush, clean, and sanitize all equipment and fixtures with water line connections - post-mix beverage machines, spray misters, steam kettles, coffee or tea urns, sinks, and other equipment with water connections in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- ☐ Clean water line strainers on mechanical dishwashing machines and run three complete cycles prior to use. Verify sanitization by using test kits or a registering thermometer.
- ☐ Follow the manufacturer's directions, if available, to flush ice machines or follow the instructions below.
  - Flush the water line to the machine inlet.
  - Close valve on water line and disconnect water line from the inlet.
  - Open valve, run water through for 10 minutes, dispose of the water, and close the valve.
  - Reconnect to the machine inlet, open valve, and flush the water lines in the machine.

- Replace filters on equipment if not designed to be cleaned in place.
- Turn on the machine and throw away the first three batches of ice.
- ☐ Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- ☐ Run drinking fountains continuously for two minutes to flush the system.
- ☐ Clean and sanitize all fixtures and sinks connected to water lines.
- ☐ Change out all filters after water lines have been flushed.
- ☐ Clean and sanitize all tools and equipment used for cleaning.

## Meet the Requirements to Resume Normal Operations:

- ☐ Water service has been restored to providing hot and cold potable (drinking) water under pressure.
- ☐ The Boil Water Notice has been lifted (if applicable).
- ☐ All food and beverages made or rinsed with potentially contaminated water have been properly discarded.
- ☐ All plumbing fixtures and pipes are operating properly and are in good repair.
- ☐ All equipment with water line connections have been flushed, cleaned, and sanitized.
- ☐ No imminent health hazard exists.

## PREPARE TO REOPEN

### Meet the Requirements to Resume Normal Operations

- ☐ Water service has been restored to providing hot and cold potable (drinking) water under pressure.
- ☐ All plumbing fixtures and pipes are operating properly and are in good repair.
- ☐ All equipment with water line connections have been flushed, cleaned and sanitized.
- ☐ No imminent health hazard exists.

### Contact BCHS at [www.houstonconsumer.org](http://www.houstonconsumer.org) or [chs@houstontx.gov](mailto:chs@houstontx.gov)

- ☐ For approval to open if your establishment did not follow a BCHS-accepted plan for an interruption in water service.\*\*\*

**OR**

- ☐ If your establishment closed due to another imminent health hazard.

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

\*\*\*

- ☐ **If and only if** your establishment followed a BCHS-accepted plan for an interruption in water service:
  - Normal operations may be resumed once the requirements are met.
  - Notify BCHS that normal operations are being resumed.

Please contact the Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) with any questions or concerns. 5/5/21



**HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
 8000 North Stadium Drive, Houston TX 77054  
 832-393-5100  
[CHS@houstontx.gov](mailto:CHS@houstontx.gov)  
[HOUSTONCONSUMER.ORG](http://HOUSTONCONSUMER.ORG)



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# Reference Documents



## Emergency Contacts

NAME	PHONE #	EMERGENCY#	CELL#
Police, Fire, Other Emergencies	<b>911</b>		
Manager			
Regional Office/Home Office			
Food Safety – Bureau of Consumer Health Services (Houston Health Department)	<b>(832) 393-5100</b>		
Insurance Carrier			
Houston Permitting Center	<b>(832) 394-8810</b>		
Distributor			
Food Supplier			
Lawyer			
Water	<b>311</b>		
Sewer	<b>311</b>		
Power			
Gas			
Phone			
Cable			
Radio/TV Station			
Plumber			
Electrician			
Licensed Water Hauler			
Bottled Water Supplier			
Commercial and Dry Ice Suppliers			
Refrigerated Trucking Company			
Refrigerated Warehouse			
Portable Generator Supplier			
Portable Toilets and Hand Sink Supplier			
Permitted Salvage Dealer			
Solid Waste Hauler; Compactor Servicing Companies			
Licensed Fats/Oils/Grease Transporter and Pressure Washer Service			
Cleaning Equipment Supplier			
Janitorial Service			
Fire Extinguisher Service			
Building Restoration Service			
<i>Other Equipment Repair (walk-in cooler, etc.)</i>			
<i>Other Services, etc.</i>			

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## Food and Equipment Salvage Chart

### THROW OUT FOOD OR SERVICE ITEMS

**that have come in contact with water, sewage, smoke, fumes, chemicals and/or have been in the temperature danger zone for 4 or more hours:**

- Exposed bulk foods, produce, meat, poultry, fish, eggs
- Unpackaged food including ice and beverages
- Opened containers and packages; food in bags or canisters
- Food in cardboard boxes, paper, foil, plastic, even if the contents seem dry (cereal, rice, salt, flour, etc.)
- Sealed packages of crackers, cookies, mixes within a larger paper box, cellophane-wrapped packages
- Foods with peel-off cardboard seals (mayonnaise, salad dressing)
- Food in glass jars
- Foods, liquids, or beverages in crown-capped bottles (require opener to remove tops) or containers with pull-tops, corks, or screw caps
- Canned or bottled foods that are dented, leaking, bulging, rusted, and/or are missing the label
- Cans or bottles that are charred or were near the heat of the fire
- Cans that have been tossed about and found far from their normal storage spot
- All foods that were covered by flood water or sewage (including sealed cans)
- Refrigerated or frozen foods:
  - in contact with sewage, water, smoke, fumes, or chemical seepage
  - held above 41°F for under 135°F for 4 or more hours
  - frozen and then thawed for 4 or more hours
  - deteriorated in quality or have an unusual appearance, color, or odor
- Single-service articles (plates, cups, lids, etc.)

**WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!**

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### THROW OUT NON-FOOD ITEMS

**that have come in contact with water, sewage, smoke, fumes, and/or chemicals and cannot be effectively cleaned and sanitized:**

- Toasters and other food equipment, filters, purifiers, and beverage cartridges attached to equipment
- Soft, porous, absorbent and other non-cleanable materials including:
  - contaminated drywall, insulation, paneling
  - contaminated furnishings, carpets, pillows, wall coverings
  - contaminated books, paperwork, menus

#### KEEP

- Frozen foods if sealed in a walk-in freezer or cabinet freezer (no water, smoke, fumes, or chemical infiltration) and ambient air temperature has remained below 41°F
- Undamaged cans and bottles that have been sanitized and have no heat or water damage, were not covered by flood water or sewage, and are free from dents, bulges, leaks, or rust
- If fire, flood, or sewage backup has been effectively contained:
  - food in areas unaffected by smoke, fumes, water, heat, fire suppression chemicals, floodwater, or sewage backup may be salvaged
  - seek the advice of your inspector

**To sanitize undamaged cans that were not covered by flood water or sewage:**

- Remove paper label
- Wash with soap and water, then rinse
- Sanitize with sanitizing solution and air dry
- Relabel with permanent marker

**Sanitizing Solution:** use 1 tablespoon (unscented, non-splashless) household (5-6%) chlorine bleach per gallon of water



## Proper Disposal of Contaminated Food

### Separate Contaminated Foods from Wholesome Food

- Record the type and pounds of food to be discarded and the method of disposal. Keep records for insurance and health inspection purposes.
- Ensure food is properly disposed of as soon as possible.

### For a Small Volume of Food:

- Place discarded food in plastic trash bags. Double bag all wet-food debris.
- Denature with a cleaning product.
- Place tied bags into dumpsters or trash cans that have tight-fitting lids to keep out pests.
- Contact your waste hauler regarding trash pickup to ensure dumpsters or trash cans are emptied at the earliest opportunity.

### For a Large Volume of Food:

- Contact your waste hauler regarding your need for immediate service.
- Place food in covered containers or plastic bags in a designated condemned food storage area away from food preparation and food equipment until food can be removed from your establishment. You want to prevent the food from being put back into food storage or from being served.
- Store contaminated refrigerated food in a refrigerated location separate from unaffected food.
- Label food for disposal **"NOT FOR SALE"** and restrict access to the specially designated storage areas.
- Wash and disinfect the entire refrigerated area after the contaminated food is removed.

***Follow City of Houston Solid Waste Management's announcements and guidelines for disposal of disaster debris.***

***Helpful Hint: Use a camera to document discarded goods for insurance purposes.***

### Solid Waste Storage Areas

***Waste collection and disposal facilities may not be functioning after a disaster.***

- Place tied bags in dumpsters or trash cans with secure lids to avoid attracting rodents.
- Watch daily for spills, leakages, and pests.
- Make sure containers stay closed and clean.

### Distressed Food

- Distressed foods, such as foods subjected to fire, flooding, excessive heat, smoke, radiation, or other environmental contamination **may not** be donated, sold, or otherwise used for direct consumption by the consumer.
- Distressed foods may be sold or donated to a licensed food salvage establishment if the establishment is permitted under the provisions of Chapter 432 of the Texas Health and Safety Code. To check licensee status: <https://vo.ras.dshs.state.tx.us/>

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## Requirements to Resume Normal Operations

**The following criteria must be met before requesting approval to resume normal food operations or to request a pre-opening inspection:**

- ☐ If required, appropriate City of Houston plans have been submitted and approved, and permits have been obtained from the Houston Permitting Center to replace large, floor-mounted equipment, repair/replace interior surfaces, and/or repair, reconstruct, or remodel the facility's structure. Work has been completed as required. *A pre-opening inspection must be requested.*
- ☐ Electricity, water, wastewater, and/or gas services have been fully restored.
- ☐ All circuit breakers have been properly reset as needed.
- ☐ All equipment and facilities are operating properly and in good repair including:
  - Lighting
  - Refrigeration
  - Hot-holding
  - Cooking
  - Ventilation
  - Water supply
  - Hot water heaters
  - Toilet facilities
  - Warewashing machines
  - Handwashing facilities
- ☐ All unsalvageable food, equipment, and any other items have been properly disposed of or are segregated from uncontaminated food and equipment.
- ☐ The approximate number of pounds of food to be disposed/has been disposed of and the method of disposal is documented.
- ☐ All contaminated floors, walls, and other affected nonfood-contact surfaces have been replaced or cleaned, rinsed, and sanitized. Surfaces contaminated by flood waters or sewage have been washed, rinsed, and disinfected rather than sanitized.
- ☐ All affected food-contact surfaces, equipment, and utensils have been washed, rinsed, and sanitized. Food-contact surfaces contaminated by flood waters or sewage have been washed, rinsed and disinfected, rinsed again, and then sanitized and air dried.
- ☐ Ice machines and ice bins affected by a power outage or interruption in water service have been emptied, cleaned, and sanitized.
- ☐ For an interruption in water service, all water connections have been flushed and all equipment with water connections has been cleaned and sanitized.
- ☐ All items involved in the cleanup (clothing, cleaning tools, water faucets, and sinks) have been cleaned and disinfected, discarded, or sent to a commercial laundry service.
- ☐ If flooded, the grease trap has been serviced by a permitted transporter prior to the reinspection.
- ☐ No imminent health hazard exists

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## Resources

### Emergency Preparedness

#### Conference for Food Protection (CFP)

<http://www.foodprotect.org/guides-documents/emergency-action-plan-for-retail-food-establishment/>

#### FDA

<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/restaurants-and-grocers-reopening-after-hurricanes-and-flooding>

<https://www.fda.gov/food/retail-food-protection/food-defense-emergency-response-retail-food>

### General

#### Six Steps to Proper Disinfectant Use

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-04/documents/disinfectants-onepager.pdf>

#### EPA Registered Disinfectant for Norovirus

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-g-epas-registered-antimicrobial-products-effective-against-norovirus>

#### Handwashing Posters

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>

#### City of Houston Permitted Transporters

[http://houston.tx.gov/health/Environmental/specialwaste\\_servicecompany.html](http://houston.tx.gov/health/Environmental/specialwaste_servicecompany.html)

### COVID-19 Guidance

#### CDC Printable Educational Materials

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/print-resources.html?Sort=Date%3A%3Adesc>

#### Workplaces

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>

#### Considerations for Restaurants and Bars

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/business-employers/bars-restaurants.html>

#### Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19 in Humans

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

#### EPA-Registered Disinfectants for COVID-19

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

5/05/21



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