



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH County of Riverside

INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN NO. 69-01-DES

DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION

FOOD SAFETY IN RETAIL FOOD FACILITIES DURING PERIODS OF ROLLING BLACKOUTS

This bulletin is provided to assist retail food facilities in safe food handling during power outages.

The public's health need not be compromised if appropriate safety measures are followed.

➤ **If electricity is off for one hour or less:**

1) **FOOD STORAGE:** Food held in refrigerators or freezers may still be safe as long as the power outage is of short duration. The following recommendations should be strictly adhered to:

- Keep refrigerator doors closed while the power is off. Commercial refrigerators are designed to hold food below 41°F for short periods of time.
- Add clean ice or dry ice inside refrigerators/freezers of high-risk foods to extend cold storage time. Never handle dry ice with bare hands, or inhale fumes directly.
- Do not place hot foods inside the refrigerator when the power is off. This will raise the temperature inside the unit. Hot foods may be chilled with ice baths.
- If food inside a freezer has thawed, but not exceeded 41°F, it must be cooked or stored inside an operating refrigerator. **Thawed food must never be refrozen.**

2) **OPERATIONS:** Limited serving of customers may be allowed if food has already been prepared. Keep in mind that this may not be a reasonable option if your food preparation area or customer seating area is dark.

- Salad bars/serving lines may be kept in temperature with ice baths. (Ensure temperature of 45°F or below is maintained).
- Foods that are not completely cooked should not be served. These foods should be discarded.
- Accept no perishable food deliveries during blackout.

3) **EQUIPMENT:** Some gas appliances that have an electronic ignition will not be operational during a power outage. Gas fed water heaters will not be affected by power outages. Most importantly any hood system above cooking equipment will not work without electrical power and therefore all cooking equipment underneath it may not be used.

- If your facility does not have hot water, **YOU MUST CLOSE.** Without hot water there is no sanitary method of washing hands or utensils.
- An automatic dishwasher will not work without power. You may use a 3-compartment sink to wash, rinse, and sanitize utensils. Alternately, you may use single-service utensils for your customers. If neither of these options will work, you must close your facility.
- You may not use cooking appliances located under a ventilation hood, if the hood is not operational.

OFFICES IN: RIVERSIDE, BLYTHE, CORONA, HEMET, INDIO, MURRIETA AND PALM SPRINGS

For more information call (888) 722-4234

Department Web Site – www.rivcoeh.org

- **If electricity is off for over one hour:**
 - 1) For safety and liability reasons, you must close during extended power outages.
 - 2) If you voluntarily close your facility during a power outage, ensure all the following are met prior to re-opening;
 - Hot water is available at all sinks.
 - Refrigerators are capable of holding foods at 41°F or below.
 - Freezers are capable of holding foods in a solid frozen state.
 - All electrical appliances are operational.
 - Circuit breakers have been checked and reset if necessary.
 - Food that has been in the “Danger Zone” (42°F-134°F) for 2 hours or longer has been discarded.

- **During extended power outages our Department may order your facility to close.**
 - 1) If your facility has been ordered closed by our Department, you may not re-open until approval is granted from our Department.
 - The facility must be inspected by an Environmental Health Specialist prior to reopening.

- **If you are found operating in violation of these guidelines or an order from our Department to close your facility, one or more of the following actions may occur:**
 - 1) Notice of Violation
 - 2) Citation
 - 3) Permit Suspension or Revocation
 - 4) Referral to the District Attorney
 - 5) Foods ordered discarded.

*Document available in an alternate format upon request.