

SANI-GRAM

Patco 
FOOD SAFETY

A Focus on Food Safety

Tips for Restaurants and Grocers for Before and After Severe Storms

At the time of this writing, the Atlantic coast is up to the letter H (Hermine) in named storms and hurricanes; the Pacific coast has reached the letter N (Newton). 'Tis the season for severe storms to strike. Following are some tips for restaurants and grocers to prepare for, and recover from storms, hurricanes, and other weather-related events. Keep in mind that needs differ and change from one facility to another.

Prepare

- Account for all hazards. Plan in advance to manage emergencies.
- Have a plan prepared for your staff to follow in the event of a power outage. This could include loss of electricity, potable (safe to consume) water, gas, and phone service. Involve all co-workers in all levels of planning for an emergency. Make sure staff is trained regularly on what to do.
- Assemble an emergency kit, just like you would at home. Include flashlights, batteries, water, and other essentials. Make sure to include food thermometers which are critical for checking temperature of your establishment's food stock.
- Create a list of important phone numbers – owner, managers, and utility companies. Establish a "phone chain" for staff and management to be in contact with each other.
- Make sure you plan for the possible need to shelter in place or to evacuate.
- Conduct a room-by-room walk-through. Determine what items need to be secured, and then take the appropriate steps to secure those physical assets.
- Secure the area. Board up windows, place sandbags by entrances into the building to reduce flooding. Remove ice from ice bins or ice machines, and unplug all appliances and electronics.
- Make sure your data and information technology systems are protected.

During a Power Outage

- Help any customers safely out of your restaurant if the outage is expected to last longer than a few minutes.
- Cease all cooking and discard any undercooked foods.
- Do not place any hot foods in the refrigerators, as it will make the internal temperature of the unit rise rapidly. Use ice or ice baths to rapidly cool small batches of hot foods.
- Continue to practice good personal and food hygiene. If possible, continue to use detergent, water and sanitizer to clean surfaces, utensils and dishes*. Wash hands often and if available, use hand sanitizers in addition.

Food Monitoring During an Outage

- Pay special attention to TCS foods in your food service establishment. This includes foods high in protein, such as meat, eggs, and dairy; and cooked vegetables that support rapid bacterial growth.
- Make sure foods in your establishment stay out of the temperature danger zone of 41°F. to 135°F.
- Keep refrigerator doors closed as much as possible. Any potentially hazardous food that has been above 41°F. for over four hours should be discarded. Keep freezer doors closed. Bunch items close together to maintain a lower temperature. You can use ice or dry ice for prolonged periods of power loss. All frozen foods should remain solid. Any partially thawed items should be discarded.
- It is best to just discard any foods that need hot held if the internal temperature drops below 135°F.
- Consider other options for food storage if the power outage is expected to last awhile, such as refrigerated trucks. Never take foods from your facility to personal homes for temporary storage.

Facts About Hurricanes

- The hurricane season in the Atlantic is June 1st to November 30th, although most happen in August, September and October. September is the most active of the hurricane season's months. Over the Western Pacific the tropical cyclone season is never quite over.
- A hurricane can be up to 600 miles in diameter and can reach eight miles into the air.
- Hurricanes often cause between 3-6 inches of rainfall in a short period. In 1921 a hurricane deposited 23 inches on Texas in a single day.
- The energy released by a hurricane would, if converted into electricity, power the United States for 3 years.
- The deadliest hurricane in U.S. history hit Galveston, TX in 1900. The "Galveston Hurricane" as it was called, killed six thousand people, mostly from drowning, when an eight to fifteen-foot storm surge inundated Galveston Island.
- Hurricane Andrew, which hit South Florida and Louisiana in 1992, was the most costly hurricane ever, with an estimated damage of at least \$30 billion.



When In Doubt, Throw It Out

Following is a list of foods that should be discarded after 4 hours above 41°F., and foods that can be kept safely at any temperature but may impact the quality of the foods.

Discard:

- Meat, poultry, fish, eggs and egg substitutes – raw or cooked
- Milk, cream, soft cheeses
- Casseroles, stews, or soups
- Lunch meats and hot dogs
- Creamy-based foods made on-site
- Custard, chiffon, pumpkin, or cheese pies
- Cream-filled pastries
- Cookie dough made with eggs
- Whipped butter
- Cut melons
- Cooked vegetables

Keep:

- Butter or margarine
- Hard and processed cheeses
- Fresh uncut fruits and vegetables
- Dried fruits and coconut
- Opened jars of vinegar-based salad dressings, jelly, relish, taco sauce, barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup, olives, and peanut butter
- Fruit juices
- Fresh herbs and spices
- Fruit pies, breads, rolls, and muffins
- Cakes, except cream cheese frosted or cream-filled
- Flour and nuts

After Power Is Restored

- Check all foods with a food thermometer to ensure they are out of the danger zone and still safe to consume. Discard immediately any items that are not safe.
- Ensure there is no other damage to the establishment and that all power utilities are working properly.
- Call your local or state health department. Your facility will likely need to be checked before re-opening. This visit will ensure that your establishment is safe and ready for your customers to return.
- After any natural disaster, there are potential health concerns that can be created by disruptions of power and utilities. The US Food and Drug Administration has published a document providing food safety suggestions and information for retail and foodservice establishments resuming business after a natural or other disaster.

**Patco Food Safety recommends BruTab 6S as a sanitizer for professional food service providers. It can be easily stored with an empty spray bottle in an emergency kit for use after the storm subsides. This single-dose effervescent 334mg. tablet, dissolved in a 1-quart spray bottle of water, delivers accurate strength solution every time, eliminating measure and pour guesswork.*

Sources: Virginia Dept. of Health at www.vdh.virginia.gov and National Restaurant Association at www.restaurant.org

Ask the Expert: For any Food Safety or Sanitation questions or concerns, contact Linda Wilt via email - LWilt@hccinc.com