



Loss of Power Guidance

For Food Establishments



Applicable Laws and Rules

Food establishments must adhere to specific regulations to ensure food safety during a loss of power. Key regulations include:

- [FDA Food Code §8-404.11](#) – This section outlines the requirements for operating during emergencies, including power outages. It emphasizes the need to prevent foodborne illness and ensure safe food handling practices.
- [15A NCAC 18A .2600](#) – Rules Governing the Sanitation of Food Service Establishments, which serve as the regulatory basis for food service operations within North Carolina.
- [NCGS 130A-23](#), [NCGS 130A-248](#) – North Carolina General Statutes, which give legal requirements for all food establishments to have a permit to operate and provide the conditions under which a permit can be suspended (imminent hazard).

Procedures During a Power Loss

Immediately upon experiencing a power outage, food establishments should follow these procedures to protect food safety:

1. Evaluate Refrigeration

- Check the temperature of refrigerated foods. Use calibrated thermometers to assess the internal temperature of time/temperature control for safety (TCS) foods.
- Prioritize checking high-risk items like meat, poultry, seafood, dairy products, and cooked vegetables.

1. Evaluate Cooking

- Discontinue all cooking operations immediately if the power loss prevents proper cooking and temperature control.
- Food that is partially cooked and cannot be fully cooked to safe temperatures should be discarded.

1. Handwashing

- Ensure that adequate handwashing facilities are available. If the power outage affects water supply or water heating, provide an alternative water source and sanitizer for hand hygiene. Use potable (safe for human consumption) water, if available, or bottled water.

1. Discontinue Operations if Unsafe:

- If conditions become unsafe (e.g., lack of temperature control, inadequate lighting or ventilation, inability to maintain hygiene), discontinue operations immediately. The health and safety of both employees and customers are paramount.

Emergency Operations Plan

A well-defined emergency operations plan is crucial for managing power outages effectively. The plan should include:

- **Backup Power**
 - If possible, have a backup power source (e.g., generator) to maintain refrigeration, lighting, and essential equipment during a power outage.
 - Ensure the generator is properly maintained and tested regularly.
- **Monitoring Food Temperatures**
 - Continuously monitor the temperature of refrigerated and frozen foods. Keep a detailed log of temperature readings.
 - The FDA Food Code states that refrigerated foods should be held at 41°F (5°C) or below. Frozen foods should remain frozen.
- **Disposal Protocols**
 - Establish clear protocols for disposing of unsafe food. Discard any time/temperature for safety (TCS) foods that have been above 41°F (5°C) for more than 4 hours.
 - Clearly label and segregate food intended for disposal to prevent accidental use.
- **Alternate Lighting and Ventilation**
 - Have a plan for providing alternate lighting (e.g., flashlights, battery-powered lanterns) to maintain visibility.
 - Ensure adequate ventilation to prevent the buildup of fumes or odors.
- **Communication Plan**
 - Establish a communication plan to notify staff and customers about the power outage and any operational changes.

Requirements for Reopening

Before resuming operations after a power outage, food establishments must ensure the following:

- **Restoration of Power**
 - Confirm that power has been fully restored and that all systems are functioning correctly.
- **Temperature Verification**
 - Verify the temperature of all refrigerated and frozen foods. Discard any foods that have been held at unsafe temperatures.
- **Discarding Unsafe Food**
 - Discard all TCS foods that have been above 41°F (5°C) for more than 4 hours. Document the disposal of these foods.
- **Cleaning and Sanitizing**
 - Thoroughly clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces, equipment, and utensils.
 - Pay special attention to areas that may have been affected by the power outage, such as refrigerators and freezers.
- **Health Department Approval**
 - Contact your local health department to inform them of the power outage and the steps taken to ensure food safety.
 - Obtain approval from the health department before reopening to the public. An inspection may be required to ensure compliance with food safety regulations.

