

# **Emergency Action Planning Guidance for Retail Food Establishments**

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Practical guidance for retail grocery and food service establishments in planning for and responding to emergencies that have the potential to create an imminent health hazard.

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**Madison Health  
Department**

Madison Health Department

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### Introduction

According to the National Archives and Records Administration:

- 43% of companies struck by disaster never resume operations.

- 29% of those that resume business fail within two years.

The high cost of paying staff that are idle, cost associated with loss of staff, added work and material costs related to the disaster, loss of inventory, other hard cash costs, lost business, lost customer loyalty, and lost customer confidence all take a toll.

It is therefore important to plan ahead and be prepared. You should consider the type of hazards for which your business is most vulnerable and take precautions to minimize the impact of such occurrences. For example, of the imminent health hazards listed in this document, statistics show that interruption of electrical service is likely to be the most common. Ask yourself: What would you do if your establishment lost power today? What would you do if the power outage lasts for an extended period of time, is widespread, and many people are competing for ice, batteries, generators, refrigerated trucks, etc.? Would your business survive?

A food establishment manager (or the “Person-in-Charge”) is responsible for conducting both initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements. The manager or the Person-in-charge is also responsible for ensuring all food service employees know where written procedures can be located and are trained on what actions to take as a part of the response procedures.

This document is designed to provide guidance in the development of emergency procedures for retail food establishments. Individual establishments can use the samples and resources in this document to develop procedures that meet the needs of their specific organization. In the event disaster strikes, do you know what your organization’s emergency procedures are?

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING**

### ***Interruption of Electrical Service***

Power outages are the most frequent type of man-made disasters. Statistics indicate that the average power outage lasts four hours, but could last for days. The August 2003 power outage disaster affecting large areas in the northeastern part of the country lasted four days.

- Consider your access to an electrical generator to be used in emergencies. Make certain that the generator has the capacity to operate critical equipment such as refrigeration and freezer units, pumps, safety lighting, hot water heaters, etc. **Make certain that individuals are trained to operate the equipment safely. Be sure to consult with a licensed electrician. Advise the utility company that you are using a generator as a safety precaution for their employees.**
- Consider securing access to a refrigerated truck that can be delivered to the site during an emergency.
- Consider securing access to a refrigerated warehouse that has a back-up generator to which you can bring food needing refrigeration in insulated containers.

- If, you plan on remaining open during an interruption of electrical service, prepare an “emergency menu” in advance including recipes for food items that do not require cooking since the ventilation system will no longer remove smoke, steam, grease laden air, etc.
- Develop a plan for minimizing loss of food product held under refrigeration. Opening refrigeration equipment doors will cause the food to warm more quickly. What is your strategy for loss prevention?
- Develop a plan to monitor and record product temperatures and a plan to relocate product(s) from display cases to walk in coolers, freezers, or reefers (refrigerated trailers) as needed to maintain safe internal temperatures.
- If you plan to use ice to keep food cold, where will you obtain ice when ice is in high demand by the general population?
- Dry ice should not be used in enclosed spaces (i.e. walk-in cooler) because of the potential build-up of carbon dioxide. If used, pack potentially hazardous food in dry ice using precautions, such as utilizing insulated gloves to handle and venting the area before entering.
- Heating, air conditioning, security systems, computers, cash registers, lighting, and other systems may not operate. Develop a plan for coping with these problems.
- Maintain contact information for people that can help you such as the utility company, garbage hauling service, ice supplier, refrigerated truck company, food warehouse, septic tank pumping service, local health department, emergency broadcast station frequency numbers, etc.
- Develop a list of equipment that uses electricity in your establishment and develop a contingency plan that describes what you would do if electrical service is interrupted. Use the *Emergency Planning and Guidance* sections of this document as a template to help describe the steps that you would take in your own establishment.
- Develop a plan for communicating with key people in your organization. Keep an updated list of emergency contact numbers with you at all times.
  - Consider the purchase of a phone that can use common batteries or can be plugged in to alternative energy sources (such as a car lighter).
  - Utilize a cellular or satellite service that can provide continuous service in the event of a power outage.
  - Consider use of wireless e-mails, text messaging, instant messaging or other alternative means of communication.
  - Plan how important documents and other information will be communicated without the use of computers and fax machines.

### ***Interruption of Water Service***

- If, you plan on remaining open during an interruption of water service, prepare an “emergency menu” in advance including recipes for food items that require no water or minimal amounts of water to prepare.

## ***Emergency Action Planning Guidance for Retail Food Establishments***

- Maintain an inventory of single-service and single-use articles to help get through a reasonable time period (plastic gloves, plastic cups/utensils, plastic/paper plates).
- Maintain an inventory of bottled water.
- Maintain an inventory of containers suitable for hauling water.
- Maintain an inventory of disposable gloves and hand sanitizer.
- Develop a business agreement with a supplier of bottled water or a licensed drinking water hauler that will provide assurance that you will have an alternative source of water available during an emergency.
  
- Locate public water supplies in your area and points where containers can be filled with drinking water.
- Develop a contingency plan for toilets. If the water service is interrupted, where will you and your employees find toilet facilities available for use?
- Develop a business agreement with a supplier of ice in order to assure you that you will have access to ice during an emergency.
- Maintain current contact information for people that can help you such as your plumber, water well drilling contractor, utility company, ice supplier, water supplier, fire department, local health department, emergency broadcast station frequencies, etc.
- Develop a list of equipment that uses water in your establishment and develop a contingency plan that describes what you would do if the water is either interrupted or contaminated. Use the *Emergency Guidance* section of this document as a guide to help describe the steps that you would take in your own establishment.

### ***Sewage Backup***

- Develop a list of equipment and facilities that have a drain. What specific steps would you take if each piece of equipment or a combination were no longer operable due to a drainage problem? Use this *Emergency Guidance for Retail Food Establishments* as a guide to help describe the steps that you would take in your own establishment.
- Develop a contingency plan for toilets. If the drain no longer functions, where will your employees and patrons find toilet facilities available for use?
- Maintain current contact information for people that can help you such as the plumber, drain cleaning service, utility company, septic tank pumping service, local health department, etc.

## **Fire**

- Post the phone number of the fire department in a conspicuous place by each phone.
- Ask the local fire marshal or other authority to conduct an assessment to determine if there are any fire hazards.
- Develop a plan for what to do in case of a fire. Have a practice fire drill.
- Have alternate exits in case of fire blockage.
- Assure that your fire extinguisher is charged and fire suppression system inspections are up-to-date.
- Maintain current contact information for people that can help you such as the fire department, police department, insurance company, water and fire damage, restoration company, utility companies, lawyer, local health department, etc.

## **Flood**

- Determine if food and other products that can be damaged by water are being stored in areas prone to flooding, are off of the floor, are not under water and/or sewer lines, etc.
- Develop a plan for monitoring and maintaining sump pumps, down spouts, plumbing, exterior surface grading, storm drains, and other facilities that can contribute to flooding.
- Have an alternate exit out of the property identified in case of flood debris blockage
- Consult with a rubbish management company for removal of any flood debris.
- Maintain current contact information for people that can help you such as the plumber, electrician, local rent-all store, fire department, police department, insurance company, water damage restoration firms, utility companies, local health department, etc.

## **Responsibilities of the License Holder**

### **Single Event**

In the event of an imminent health hazard involving interruption of electrical service, interruption of water service, contaminated water supply, fire, flood, or sewage back-up at an individual establishment, the License Holder shall:

1. Assess the situation. Immediately discontinue operation if a safe operation cannot be maintained using an alternative procedure.
2. Notify the regulatory authority of the imminent health hazard and discuss alternate procedures to be used. Determine if the issue is widespread.
3. Follow the appropriate emergency procedures if approved by the regulatory authority or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the regulatory authority.

## **Widespread Emergency**

In the event of an imminent health hazard involving interruption of electrical service, interruption of water service, contaminated water supply, fire, flood, or sewage back-up that affects numerous establishments, the License Holder shall:

1. Conduct an evaluation of the operation as it relates to the hazard to determine if a safe operation can be maintained in accordance with applicable regulations.
2. Close the establishment if a safe operation cannot be assured.
3. If a safe operation can be assured, the establishment can remain open provided the appropriate action plan is followed.

## ***Responsibilities of the Regulatory Authority***

### ***The Regulatory Authority will:***

1. Promptly respond to single events involving imminent health hazards and provide guidance to help the license holder resume operation as quickly as possible. **It is probably not necessary, and too time consuming, to conduct a full retail food inspection.** The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), Food and Drug Safety Program website has sample inspection forms and placards that can be used during an emergency. The web site address is: <http://nj.gov/health/foodanddrugsafety>
2. Allow license holders to assess food safety within their individual establishment during a widespread emergency and allow the license holder to follow the action plan.
3. Communicate with the industry during widespread emergencies through business associations (i.e. Food Marketing Institute, New Jersey Restaurant Association, etc.), conference calls, mass media, hot lines, web sites, etc.
4. Conduct surveillance during a widespread emergency to determine if license holders are following the action plan.
5. Conduct enforcement activity as appropriate to protect public health.
6. **When preparing for an emergency, lines of communication should be established between emergency response personnel and the local health department. It is important that emergency response personnel (police, fire) include the local health department in any decision making regarding the closure of a food establishment.**

## **EMERGENCY GUIDANCE**

### ***Interruption of Electrical Service***

For the purpose of defining an imminent health hazard for this guidance, an extended interruption of electrical service means that the electrical service has been interrupted for **two hours or more**, the Person-in-Charge must:

1. Note the date and time of the interruption in electrical service
2. Assess the affected operations
3. Immediately notify the regulatory authority, and
4. Implement their emergency procedures, if approved by the regulatory authority, or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the regulatory authority.
5. In a widespread event, when contact with the regulatory agency is not possible, immediately discontinue operations if a safe operation cannot be maintained using alternative procedures.

### **ASSESSMENT**

In the event of an emergency involving electrical service interruption, appropriate food establishment responses must be taken after an assessment of multiple factors including but not limited to:

- The complexity and scope of food operations,
- The duration of the emergency event,
- The impact on other critical infrastructure and services (example: water supply), and
- The availability of alternative procedures that can be used to meet the requirements of *N.J.A.C. Chapter 24, "Sanitation in Retail Food Establishments and Food and Beverage Vending Machines"* (NJ Food Code).

### **RESPONSE**

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific affected food operations during an extended interruption of electrical service.

#### ***Refrigeration***

The lack of adequate refrigeration may result in the growth of pathogenic or disease causing organisms and toxins in foods that require temperature control for food safety.

**Alternative Procedures**

- Monitor and record food temperatures every 2 hours (see chart in Recovery Section for disposition of potentially hazardous food) – document that you have acted responsibly.
- Keep refrigeration equipment doors closed
- Pack potentially hazardous food in commercially made ice or dry ice (\*use precautions for using dry ice in the *Planning* section of this document)
- Relocate product in cases to walk-in boxes, freezers, or reefers if safe temperatures cannot be maintained in the cases.
- Do not put hot food into refrigeration equipment.

***Ventilation***

*Inadequate mechanical ventilation may result in a build-up of cooking smoke, heat, steam, grease, grease laden air, etc.*

**Alternative Procedures**

- Discontinue all cooking operations.

***Lighting***

*The lack of artificial illumination may negatively impact personal safety, food preparation, food handling, cleaning equipment/utensils, premises, etc.*

**Alternative Procedures**

- Limit operation to daylight hours. Restrict operations to those that can be safely conducted in available natural light.
- Provide lighting using other power sources (i.e. battery operated lantern, flashlight, etc. if fire codes allow). Limit operation to those procedures that can be safely conducted using alternative lighting.

***Cooking Equipment***

Cooking equipment that is no longer functional may result in inadequate cooking processes that permit the survival and growth of pathogens.

**Alternative Procedures**

- Evaluate time and temperature to determine if foods should be discarded

- Discard raw animal/potentially hazardous foods that were in the cooking or re-heating process but did not reach a safe final temperature.

**And**

- Discontinue cooking operations.

### ***Hot Food Holding***

Hot holding equipment that is no longer functional may result in unsafe temperatures that allow for the growth of pathogens.

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Note the time the power outage begins.

**And**

- Discard all potentially hazardous food after **4 hours** from being removed from temperature control (below 135° F)

**Or**

- Use an alternate heat source such as “canned heat” and monitor temperatures hourly. Note: If power returns within 4 hours, reheat food to 165° F.

### ***Dishwashing Equipment***

Equipment for cleaning and sanitizing utensils and tableware that is no longer operational may result in contamination of food contact surfaces.

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Use the three compartment sink if hot water is still available

**Or**

- Use single service tableware

**And**

- Discontinue operations that generate soiled utensils/tableware.

### ***Water***

Wells which rely on electric pumps will no longer function resulting in a water interruption.

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- See “Interruption of Water Service” procedures.

### ***Sewage Disposal***

Sewage ejector pump(s) that no longer function may result in sewage overflow and backups.

**Alternative Procedures**

- Discontinue all operations. Contact the local health department for possible options.

**Electric Hot Water Heater**

Electric hot water heaters will no longer function resulting in an interruption of hot water for effective ware washing and hand washing.

**Alternative Procedures**

- Heat water on a gas cooking appliance.

**RECOVERY**

Recovery involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a normal safe operation. (See Extended Interruption of Water Service for re-opening considerations relative to the water supply.)

**A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory authority.**

Frozen foods that remain solid or semi-solid can be refrozen if food packages show no evidence of thawing such as weeping, stains, physical depreciation, evaporation, or container damage. If product is somewhat thawed or soft and has not exceeded 41°F on the outside and the inner core is still solid, it can be refrozen or further processed/cooked by food service operators. This product is not recommended for retail sale due to quality deficiencies.

**Refrigerated Food Safety Guide**

<b>COLD FOODS INTERNAL TEMPURTURE GUIDANCE</b>			
<b>Time</b>	<b>42°- 45° F</b>	<b>46°- 50° F</b>	<b>51° F or above</b>
0-2 hours	PHF (TCS) foods can be sold	Immediately cool PHF (TCS) foods to 41° F or below within 2 hours	PHF (TCS) foods <b>cannot</b> be sold. DESTROY the food.
2-3 hours	PHF (TCS) foods can be sold but	Immediately cool PHF (TCS) foods	

	must be cooled to to 41° F or below within 2 hours	to 41° F or below within 1 hour
4 hours	Immediately cool PHF (TCS) foods to 41° F or below within 1 hour	PHF (TCS) foods <b>cannot</b> be sold. DESTROY the food.
5+ hours (PHF [TCS] foods <b>cannot</b> be sold. DESTROY the foods).	PHF (TCS) foods <b>cannot</b> be sold. DESTROY the food.	

When power is restored, the following table should be used as a guide for handling potentially hazardous food (PHF) stored in refrigeration units that may have lost power. **When in doubt, throw it out!** (See the NJ Food Code for additional information regarding food temperatures.)

If the location was vacated during the power outage, upon return the storage equipment may be fully functioning and the food may be at proper temperature. However, if the duration of the power outage and the highest temperature of the food cannot be verified, **all potentially hazardous food must be discarded.**

**Key areas to consider for returning to normal operation when power is restored:**

- Electricity, potable water, and/or gas services have been fully restored.
- All circuit breakers have been properly re-set as needed.
- All equipment and facilities are operating properly including: lighting, refrigeration (back to operating temperature of 41° F and below), hot holding, ventilation, water supply, sewage pumps, hot water heaters, toilet facilities, ware washing machines and hand washing facilities.
- Food contact surfaces, equipment and utensils cleaned and sanitized prior to resuming food-handling operations. \*This includes ice bins in ice machines where ice has melted during the interruption.
- Flush all water lines, change filters, etc.

**Disposal of Food**

Small volumes of food can be denatured (such as with bleach, a detergent or other cleaning product to render it unusable) or alternatively destroyed and placed in an outside refuse bin for

removal. To discard large volumes of food, the firm should contact a disposal company for immediate transportation to a licensed landfill.

## ***Interruption of Water Service***

For the purpose of defining an imminent health hazard for this guidance, an extended interruption of water service means that the water service has been interrupted for two hours or more. For single events affecting an individual establishment, **the person-in-charge must:**

1. Note the date and time of water loss
2. Assess the operations affected
3. Immediately notify the regulatory authority at the onset of the interruption, and
4. Implement the appropriate emergency procedures if approved by the regulatory authority or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the regulatory authority.
5. In a widespread event when contact with the regulatory agency is not possible, immediately discontinue operations if a safe operation cannot be maintained using alternative procedures.

## **ASSESSMENT**

In the event of an emergency involving an interruption in water service, appropriate food establishment responses must be taken after an assessment of multiple factors including but not limited to:

- The complexity and scope of food operations,
- The onset and duration of the emergency event,
- The impact on other critical infrastructure and services, and
- The availability of alternative procedures that can be used to meet the requirements of the NJ Food Code.
- A food establishment manager or owner (or the “Person-in-Charge”) is responsible for conducting both initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

## **RESPONSE**

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific affected food operations during an extended interruption of water service.

### ***Handwashing***

No water to wash hands in food preparation area may result in contamination of food by employees.

#### **Alternative Procedure**

- Do not touch ready-to-eat foods with bare hands. Suspend otherwise approved alternative procedures for bare hand contact provided at N.J.A.C. 8:24-3.3(a)4.
- Chemically treated (wet nap) towelettes (not to be used for bare hand contact) may be used for cleaning hands if the food items offered are pre-packaged AND a hand washing facility is available at the alternate toilet room location.

**And/Or**

- Potable water from an approved public water supply system which can be placed into a clean, sanitized container with a spigot which can be turned on to allow clean, warm water to flow over one's hands into a sink drain. Provide suitable hand cleaner, disposable towels, and a waste receptacle.

**And/Or**

- Use of commercially bottled water with germicidal soap followed up by a hand sanitizer.

### ***Toilet Facilities***

A water interruption will result in inoperable restrooms for patrons and food employees.

**Alternative Procedure**

- Toilet rooms and/or portable toilets with adequate hand washing facilities, which may not be conveniently located but are easily accessible to employees during all hours of operation, may be used until water service is restored.

**Or**

- Discontinue operation if toilet facilities are not available.

### ***Drinking Water***

**Alternative Procedure**

- Use commercially bottled water

**And/Or**

- Haul water from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container

**And/Or**

- Arrange to use a licensed drinking water tanker truck

### ***Cooking – Food Preparation***

**Alternative Procedure**

- Use commercially bottled water, water hauled from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container, or water from a licensed drinking water tanker truck

**And/Or**

- Restrict the menu to items that don't require water

## **Ice**

### **Alternative Procedure**

- Use commercially manufactured ice

## **Post-mix Fountain Drinks**

### **Alternative Procedure**

- Discontinue service

## **Cleaning/Sanitizing Equipment, Utensils, Tableware, Physical Facility**

### **Alternative Procedure**

- Use single service/use articles  
**And/Or**
- Use commercially bottled water or water from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container. Water from a licensed drinking water tanker truck can also be used to clean and sanitize equipment and utensils. If water from an alternate source can be obtained, then follow established procedures to wash, rinse and sanitize. Pre-scrape prior to washing as necessary.  
**And**
- Discontinue operations as inventories of clean equipment, utensils, and/or single-service items are exhausted
- Discontinue operations when cleanliness of the physical facility jeopardizes food safety.

## **RECOVERY**

Recovery involves the necessary steps for reopening and returning to a normal safe operation.

**A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory authority.**

After water service has been restored and after either the municipality or regulatory authority has lifted any “Boiled Water Advisory”, **the person-in-charge must ensure the following has been completed:**

Flush pipes/faucets: follow the directions from the water municipality such as those via television, radio, newspaper, fax, etc. or, as general guidance, run cold water faucets for at least 5 minutes.

Equipment with waterline connections such as post-mix beverage machines, spray misters, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers, and other equipment with water connections must be flushed, cleaned, and sanitized in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions.

- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain reservoirs in tall buildings.
- Change out all filters.
- Flush beverage machines.
- Flush drinking fountains: run continuously for 5 minutes.

***Ice Machine Sanitation:***

- Flush the water line to the machine inlet
- Close the valve on the water line behind the machine and disconnect the water line from the machine inlet.
- Open the valve, run 5 gallons of water through the valve and dispose of the water.
- Close the valve.
- Reconnect the water line to the machine inlet.
- Open the valve.
- Flush the water lines in the machine.
- Turn on the machine.
- Make ice for 1 hour and **dispose** of the first batch of ice.
- Clean and sanitize all parts and surfaces that come in contact with water and ice, following the manufacturer's instructions.

Food establishments using a Non-Community Water Supply (well) must follow the requirements of the New Jersey Safe Drinking Water Regulations as implemented by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

***Contaminated Water Supply (Biological)***

For the purpose of this Emergency Guidance, an imminent health hazard exists whenever the municipality has issued a Boil Water Advisory or when an onsite water supply has exceeded the maximum contaminant level for coliform bacteria or any other contaminant. **The person-in-charge must:**

1. Note the date and time of water contamination
2. Assess the operations affected
3. Immediately notify the regulatory authority at the onset of the interruption, and
4. Implement the appropriate emergency procedures if approved by the regulatory authority or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the regulatory authority.
5. In a widespread event when contact with the regulatory agency is not possible, immediately discontinue operations if a safe operation cannot be maintained using alternative procedures.

## **ASSESSMENT**

In the event of an emergency involving a contaminated water supply, appropriate food establishment responses must be taken after an assessment of multiple factors including but not limited to:

- The complexity and scope of food operations,
- The onset and duration of the emergency event,
- The impact on other critical infrastructure and services; and
- The availability of alternative procedures that can be used to meet the requirements of the NJ Food Code.

A food establishment manager (or the “Person-in-Charge”) is responsible for conducting both initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

## **RESPONSE**

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific affected food operations during a biological contamination of the water supply (boil water advisory). Where “boiled” water is indicated, the water must remain at a rolling boil for at least five minutes. Although chemicals (e.g. bleach) are sometimes used for disinfecting small amounts of household drinking water, chemical disinfection is generally **not** an option for food establishments because of the lack of onsite equipment for testing chemical residuals.

### ***Drinking Water***

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Use commercially bottled water and/or water that has been boiled for at least 5 minutes  
**And/Or**
- Haul water from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container  
**And/Or**
- Arrange to use a licensed drinking water tanker truck.

***Beverages Made with Water*** – including post mix carbonated beverages, auto-fill coffee makers, instant hot water dispenser, juice, tea, etc.

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Discontinue use of post-mix carbonated beverage machine, auto-fill coffee makers, instant hot water heaters, etc. using auto-fill.

Additional information for safe drinking water can be found at the following website:  
[www.epa.gov/ogwdw/faq/emerg.html](http://www.epa.gov/ogwdw/faq/emerg.html).

### ***Ice Making***

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Discard existing ice.
- And**
- Discontinue making ice.
- Use commercially manufactured ice.

### ***Preparing Food Products Requiring Water***

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Discard any ready-to-eat food prepared with water prior to the discovery of the contamination.
- Prepare ready-to-eat food using commercially bottled or boiled water.

### ***Washing/Soaking Produce***

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Use pre-washed packaged produce.
- Use frozen/canned fruits and vegetables.
- And/Or**
- Wash fresh produce with boiled, commercially bottled water, or safe potable water hauled from a public water supply system.

### ***Thawing of Frozen Foods***

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Thaw only in the refrigerator or as part of the cooking process.

### ***Cooking***

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Use commercially bottled water
- And/Or**
- Haul water from an approved public water supply in a covered sanitized container
- And/Or**
- Arrange to use a licensed drinking water tanker truck.

### ***Handwashing***

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Use heated bottled water, boiled water, or safe water hauled from an approved public water supply.
- Or**
- Do not allow bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food. Suspend otherwise approved alternative procedures for bare hand contact
- And**

- Use tap water and germicidal hand soap followed by a hand sanitizer.

### ***Cleaning and Sanitizing Utensils and Tableware***

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Use single service utensils and tableware.
- Or**
- Use the existing automatic dish machine or the 3-compartment sink. Make certain that the sanitization step is being properly conducted (sanitizer concentration/temperature).

***Spray Misting Units*** – used to spray produce, seafood, meat cases, etc.

#### **Alternative Procedures**

- Discontinue use of misters.

## **RECOVERY**

Recovery involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a normal safe operation.

**A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory authority.**

After either the municipality or regulatory authority has provided notice that the water supply is safe to use, **the person-in-charge must ensure the following has been completed:**

- Flush pipes/faucets: follow the directions of your water utility (in the newspaper, radio, or television) or, as general guidance, run cold water faucets for at least 5 minutes.
- Equipment with waterline connections such as post-mix beverage machines, spray misters, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers, and other equipment with water connections must be flushed, cleaned, and sanitized in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain reservoirs in tall buildings.
- Flush drinking fountains: run continuously for 5 minutes.
- Ice Machine Sanitation:
  - Flush the water line to the machine inlet
  - Close the valve on the water line behind the machine and disconnect the water line from the machine inlet.
  - Open the valve, run 5 gallons of water through the valve and dispose of the water.
  - Close the valve.
  - Reconnect the water line to the machine inlet.

- Open the valve.
- Flush the water lines in the machine.
- Turn on the machine.
- Make ice for 1 hour and **dispose** of the first batch of ice.
- Clean and sanitize all parts and surfaces that come in contact with water and ice, following the manufacturer's instructions.

Food Establishments that utilize water from a Non-Community Water System (privately owned well) must follow the requirements of the New Jersey Safe Drinking Water Regulations as implemented by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

## ***Sewage Backup***

For the purpose of this guidance, a sewage backup means the overflow of sewage from equipment or plumbing facilities within a food establishment. N.J.A.C. Chapter 24 defines "sewage" as liquid waste that contains animal or vegetable matter in suspension or solution and may also include liquids containing chemicals in solution. Clear water waste (i.e. ice bin/machine drainage, condensation from refrigeration and air conditioning equipment) is not considered sewage. **In the event of a sewage backup, the person-in-charge must:**

1. Note the date and time of the sewage backup
2. Assess the affected operations
3. Immediately notify the regulatory authority, and
4. Immediately discontinue operation if a safe operation cannot be maintained using an alternative procedure.
5. Follow the appropriate emergency procedures if approved by the regulatory authority or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the regulatory authority.

## **ASSESSMENT**

In the event of an emergency involving a sewage backup, appropriate food establishment responses must be taken after an assessment of multiple factors including but not limited to:

- The complexity and scope of food operations,
- The duration of the emergency event,
- The impact on other critical infrastructure and services (example: food, equipment, utensils, linens, single service/use items, employee health), and
- The availability of alternative procedures that can be used to meet the requirements of the NJ Food Code.

A food establishment manager (or the "Person-in-Charge") is responsible for conducting both initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

## **RESPONSE**

The following are **temporary** alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific food operations affected during a sewage backup emergency.

### ***General***

Sewage from equipment directly connected to the plumbing system is either slow to drain or does not drain.

#### **General Procedures**

- Remove the affected equipment/fixture from service  
**And**
- Remove the obstruction or call a service company.
- Thoroughly clean any spills with a detergent solution followed by a sanitizer solution
- Keep foot traffic away from area
- Use other appliances or fixtures in the establishment that are properly operating.

### ***Handwashing***

All handwashing sinks in the establishment do not drain.

#### **Alternative Procedure**

- Chemically treated (wet nap) towelettes (not to be used for bare hand contact) may be used for cleaning hands if the food items offered are prepackaged or otherwise protected from contamination by hands AND a handwashing facility is available in the toilet room location  
**Or**
- Hot water can be placed into a 5-gallon insulated container with a spigot which can be turned on to allow clean, warm water to flow over one's hands into another container. Provide suitable hand cleaner, disposable towels, and a waste receptacle. The container may only be emptied into an operational janitor sink or toilet.  
**Or**
- Discontinue operation.

### ***Toilet Facilities***

All toilet facilities do not drain.

#### **Alternative Procedure**

- Toilet rooms that may not be conveniently located, but are accessible to employees during all hours of operation, may be used until water service is restored.  
**Or**
- Discontinue operation if no alternate toilet facilities are available.

### ***Culinary Sinks***

All sinks required for thawing food, washing fruits and vegetables, cooling food, etc, do not drain.

#### **Alternative Procedure**

- Thaw food in the refrigerator or as part of the cooking process.
- Use pre-washed packaged produce.
- Use frozen/canned fruits and vegetables that do not require washing.
- Use alternate cooling methods.
- Modify the menu to avoid procedures requiring the use of a culinary sink.

### ***Warewashing Equipment***

All dish machines, 3-compartment sinks, pot sinks do not drain.

#### **Alternative Procedure**

- Discontinue dish/utensil washing and use single service/use items.
- Discontinue affected operations after supply of clean equipment, utensils, and/or single service items is exhausted.

### ***Janitor / Utility Sink***

Utility sink does not drain.

#### **Alternative Procedure**

- Discontinue the use of the janitor sink.
- Dispose of mop water into a toilet.
- Discontinue operation if the physical facility cannot be maintained in a sanitary condition.

### ***Continuous Overflow of Sewage into the Establishment***

Sewage continues to backup into the building after the individual appliance(s) have been removed from service.

#### **Alternative Procedure**

- Discontinue operation.

## **RECOVERY**

Recovery involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a safe, normal operation.

**A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory authority.**

Determine the cause of the problem and take appropriate corrective action.

In the case of plugged drain lines, the permit holder will:

- Contact a service company to find and remove the obstruction.
- Replace worn or damaged plumbing as needed.

In case the onsite sewage disposal system is malfunctioning:

- Contact the health department for permit requirements.
- Contact a sewage pumping contractor to pump the septic tank and haul away sewage to an approved disposal site until repairs can be made.
- If necessary, barricade the affected area to keep the public and employees away from areas having exposed sewage.
- Contact a sewage disposal system installation contractor to arrange for repairs to be made.

### ***Personal Health and Safety Considerations for Employees Involved in Clean-Up***

- Wear eye protection
- Wear rubber boots that can be washed and sanitized after the event.
- Wear protective clothing such as coveralls.
- Do not allow employees to walk between the affected area and other areas of the establishment without removing footwear and protective clothing.
- Follow OSHA rules for handling detergents, sanitizers, and other chemicals used in the cleaning process.
- Handwashing – Immediately after working with contaminated materials and before engaging in food preparation activities (working with exposed food, clean equipment and utensils, unwrapped single service / use articles).
  - Double hand washing: Clean hands and exposed portions of the arms using a cleaning compound in a lavatory that is properly equipped by vigorously rubbing together the surfaces of their lathered hands and arms for at least 20 seconds and thoroughly rinsing with clean water. Repeat.
  - Dry hands using disposable towels.
  - Use a disposable towel to turn off the water to prevent re-contaminating the hands.
  - Follow-up with a hand antiseptic.
  - Have janitorial staff clean the lavatory faucets and other portions of the lavatory after use to prevent transferring any contamination to food handlers.

### ***General Clean-Up***

- All damaged food equipment, utensils, linens, and single service items must be destroyed and properly disposed of.

- Floors, walls, furnishings, carpets, utensils, and equipment damaged beyond salvage must be removed and replaced as necessary.
- Affected walls, floors, and equipment surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water, rinsed, and sanitized. Carpets should be either removed or effectively cleaned and sanitized.
- Remove wet materials. Dispose of any materials that cannot be effectively cleaned and sanitized.
- Remove any standing sewage.
- Clean and sanitize any utensils and equipment in the affected area.
- Use a detergent solution to clean floors, equipment, and other affected areas followed by a clean water rinse.
  - Disinfect the floor and any other affected areas by using an EPA-registered disinfectant such as a 500 parts per million chlorine solution or other product labeled as a disinfectant.
  - Follow manufacturer's instructions for 'disinfectant' use.
  - Air-dry the affected area.
  - Launder or discard mop heads and other cleaning aids that contacted the sewage.

**\*Alternative measure:** Hire a janitorial service having expertise in cleaning food establishments exposed to sewage backups.

### ***Contaminated Linens, Single Service / Use Items***

- Launder any linens or uniforms in contact with sewage.
  - Launder separately from other linens.
  - Use bleach.
  - Use a mechanical dryer.
- Discard any single service / use items in contact with sewage.

### ***General Food Salvage Assessment***

Discard any food or food packaging materials that have come into contact with sewage. Very few food or beverage items can be saved after being exposed to sewage. Food items in soft packaging or with screw-top lids must be destroyed. In some cases canned goods in metal cans or rigid plastic containers can be saved. Even so, the condition of the can is another limiting factor. The presence of rust, soil, or destroyed labeling precludes salvage. Refer to N.J.A.C. 8:21 Subchapter 11 for information regarding dented cans unsuitable for sale, salvage or distressed foods, and disposal of distressed foods.

Sewage can make foods unsafe to eat especially if packaging is contaminated. **Discard** the following foods if sewage has covered, splashed, dripped on or seeped into the package:

- Alcoholic beverages: Refer to your local regulatory authority for salvage or destruction.
- Exposed foods, bulk foods, fresh produce, meat, poultry, fish and eggs;

- Any foods packaged in paper, plastic, cloth, or fiber;
- Cardboard boxes, even if the contents seem dry, including cereals, pasta products, rice, salt;
- Foods with cardboard seals, such as mayonnaise and salad dressing, or foil or cellophane packages;
- Food in glass jars, including unopened jars with waxed paper, foil, cellophane or cloth covers;
- Foods, liquids or beverages in crown-capped bottles or containers with pull-tab tops, corks or screw caps;
- All opened containers and packages; foods in bags or canisters;
- Cans that are dented, leaking, bulging or rusted; and
- Cans that have been tossed about and are far from their normal storage spot (possibility of pinholes or seam fractures).
- Canned goods may not be sold without all required labeling information. Therefore, canned foods with damaged labels should be discarded.

### ***Salvaged Goods – Reconditioning***

In some cases where the quantities of food involved are large (e.g. a large supermarket or a food warehouse), it may be feasible to attempt the salvage of food items for either human or animal consumption. The salvageable items must be documented and securely moved to an approved firm that has reconditioning capability. Such activity must be coordinated with the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services Food and Drug Safety Program and the Health Department.

### ***Disposal of Food***

If it is determined that food must be discarded:

- Remove to a designated condemned food storage area away from food preparation and equipment storage and secured in covered refuse containers or other isolated areas to prevent either service to the public or accidental contamination of the facility and other food.
- If the food must be retained until the distributor can credit the facility, it must be clearly labeled as “NOT FOR SALE”.
- Discarded refrigerated food may be stored in a refrigerated location separate from other food and held for credit until recorded by food supplier/distributor.
- The facility should document the type and amount of food, costs and the reason for disposal for insurance and regulatory purposes.
- Small volumes of food to be discarded can be denatured with a cleaning product (such as bleach) and placed in a covered refuse bin outside the facility.
- Large volumes of food should be stored in covered refuse containers in a secure location and disposed of by a refuse disposal company as soon as possible.

- All food waste is to be disposed of in accordance with state and local waste disposal regulations in a licensed landfill.
- Local landfills should be contacted prior to delivery of food from a private individual or carrier to ensure acceptance of the waste.

## **Fire**

For the purpose of this Emergency Guidance, a non-reportable fire is any small confined fire in a food establishment that has been extinguished using a simple device such as a wet towel or pan lid. Otherwise, **all other fires are considered reportable and the person-in-charge must:**

1. Note the date and time of the fire
2. Assess the affected operations
3. Immediately report the fire to the regulatory authority, and
4. Immediately discontinue operation if a safe operation cannot be maintained using an alternative procedure.
5. Follow the appropriate emergency procedures if approved by the regulatory authority or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the regulatory authority.

## **ASSESSMENT**

In the event of an emergency involving a fire, appropriate food establishment responses must be taken after an assessment of multiple factors including but not limited to:

- The complexity and scope of food operations,
- The duration of the emergency event,
- The impact on other critical infrastructure and services (example: water supply, electrical service, physical facility, equipment, smoke/water damage, offensive odors, deposition of toxic chemicals), and
- The availability of alternative procedures that can be used to meet the requirements of the NJ Food Code.

A food establishment manager (or the “Person-in-Charge”) is responsible for conducting both initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

## **RESPONSE**

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific affected food operations as a result of a fire.

### ***If Fire is Contained***

The following alternative procedures may be applied if the fire is confined to a small incidental area or a single piece of equipment and fire is extinguished using a simple fire-fighting device (i.e. hand held extinguisher) that does not require extensive cleanup.

**Alternative Procedures**

- Unaffected areas of the establishment may remain open while clean-up and minor repairs are made.

***If Fire is Widespread***

The process of fighting the fire, regardless of size, contaminates the following: food, equipment, utensils, linens, single service items, etc. These contaminants are typically associated with use of high pressure fire suppression devices (i.e. ventilation hood fire suppression system or professional fire department equipment) and/or contaminated water.

**Alternative Procedure**

- Discontinue operations. Resume operations only after recovery steps have been completed.

***If Fire Causes Extensive Damage***

If the fire causes extensive damage to equipment and the facility's structure, the following procedures should be used.

**Alternative Procedure**

- Discontinue operations. Resume operations only after recovery steps have been completed.

**RECOVERY**

Recovery involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a normal safe operation.

**A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory authority.**

**The License Holder will:**

- Contact the building department and other appropriate agencies to determine if the building structure is safe and approved for occupancy.
- Sort the salvageable from the non-salvageable foods as quickly as possible.
- Properly dispose of the non-salvageable food items.
- Provide general clean-up. Clean and sanitize equipment and utensils.

***Food Salvaging/General Considerations***

In some cases where the quantities of food involved are large (e.g. a large supermarket or a food warehouse), it may be feasible to attempt salvage of food items for either human or animal consumption. The salvageable items must be documented and securely moved to an approved firm that has reconditioning capability. Such activity must be coordinated with the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services Food and Drug Safety Program and the Local Health Department.

The following is a guide for handling specific food items:

**Alcoholic beverages:** Refer to your local regulatory authority for salvage or destruction.

**Bottled soft drinks:** Unless protected by a plastic outer wrap or in bottles with sealed screw-on lids, soft drinks in glass bottles are very difficult to salvage. In addition, if soft drinks in plastic bottles have been subjected to excessive heat, fire or smoke, they are almost always deemed unsalvageable. Bottle contents must be drained before returning the containers for deposits. This can be permitted if there are proper facilities for disposing of the liquid and a health nuisance is not created. If such facilities are not available, the product and container may have to be destroyed by removing to a licensed landfill.

**Canned soft drinks:** Canned soft drinks may be salvaged if the contents have not been subjected to excessive heat or fire. The cans must be cleaned and sanitized, if necessary. If the cans have been subjected to excessive heat or are not cleanable, the contents must be destroyed.

**Dairy products:** Dairy products must be destroyed with no attempt to salvage if they have been subjected to excessive heat, fire, smoke or water or have been temperature abused due to vulnerable packaging and temperature requirements.

**Sugars, candies, flour, cereal products, bakery products, dried beans, rice, and other grains:** If subjected to excessive heat, fire, smoke or water damage, no attempt to salvage such products can be permitted due to vulnerable packaging.

**Products in glass with metal screw-type or metal slip covers:** This includes pickles, olives, catsup, steak sauces, salad dressings, syrups, etc. If subjected to excessive heat, fire, or smoke, this type of container is very difficult to clean or disinfect due to exposure of the threaded closure and may have to be destroyed.

**Fish and meats – fresh or frozen:** If they have been subjected to excessive heat, fire, smoke and/or water damage or have been temperature abused, these products must be destroyed.

**Refrigerated and frozen food:** If refrigerated and frozen foods are stored in a completely enclosed walk in refrigerator or freezer or enclosed case, and electrical service has not been interrupted for extended periods, some product may be salvaged, depending upon the severity of

heat, fire, smoke and water and the product exposure to these elements. Prompt removal of such foods to a suitable storage unit is necessary to save the product.

**Produce – fresh or dried:** If exposed to excessive heat, fire, smoke and/or water damage, no attempt to salvage can be permitted and all such products must be destroyed.

**Canned goods:** Where the heat and water damage has been minimal, canned goods can be salvaged quickly by cleaning the exterior surfaces and removing them to suitable storage areas, preferably away from the fire scene. Cleaning and re-labeling a relatively small quantity of canned goods is usually not attempted because of the cost involved compared to the lower value of the salvaged product.

### ***Charitable Donation***

It may be possible to divert some foods mentioned above, such as minimally damaged canned foods, to a local food bank for distribution to charitable organizations. Check with the DHSS Food and Drug Safety Program. A donor of food is generally protected from liability unless:

- The illness or disease resulted from the willful, wanton, or reckless acts of the donor.
- The illness or disease resulted from prepared food if any of the following apply:
  - A law of this state or a rule promulgated by an agency or department of this state concerning the preparation, transportation, storage, or serving of the prepared food was violated at any time before the food was donated.
  - The illness or disease resulted from food in hermetically sealed containers that were not prepared by a commercial processor.
  - The donor had actual or constructive knowledge that the food was tainted, contaminated, or harmful to health or wellbeing of the recipient of donated food.

### ***General Cleanup Considerations***

- All areas affected by the fire must be cleaned and sanitized.
- All damaged food products, equipment, utensils, linens, and single service/use items must be removed from the premises as necessary.
- Re-occupancy should be allowed only after the fire department has determined that the structure is safe.

### ***Disposal of Food***

If it is determined that food must be discarded:

- Remove to a designated condemned food storage area away from food preparation and equipment storage and secured in covered refuse containers or other isolated areas to prevent either service to the public or accidental contamination of the facility and other food.
- If the food must be retained until the distributor can credit the facility, it must be clearly labeled as “NOT FOR SALE”.
- Discarded refrigerated food may be stored in a refrigerated location separate from other food and held for credit until recorded by food supplier/distributor.
- The facility should document the type and amount of food, costs and the reason for disposal for insurance and regulatory purposes.
- Small volumes of food to be discarded can be denatured with a cleaning product (such as bleach) and placed in a covered refuse bin outside the facility.
- Large volumes of food should be stored in covered refuse containers in a secure location and disposed of by a refuse disposal company as soon as possible.
- All food waste is to be disposed of in accordance with state and local waste disposal regulations in a licensed landfill.

Local landfills should be contacted prior to delivery of food from a private individual or carrier to insure acceptance of the waste.

## ***Flood***

In the event of an emergency involving a flood, **the person-in-charge must:**

1. Assess the operations affected by the flood
2. Immediately notify the regulatory authority, and
3. Immediately discontinue operation if a safe operation cannot be maintained using an alternative procedure.
4. Follow the appropriate emergency procedures if approved by the regulatory authority or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the regulatory authority.

## **ASSESSMENT**

In the event of an emergency involving a flood, appropriate food establishment responses must be taken after an assessment of multiple factors including but not limited to:

- The complexity and scope of food operations,
- The duration of the emergency event,
- The impact on other critical infrastructure and services (example: water supply, food, equipment, linens, single service, wastewater disposal, site drainage, building access, indoor air quality), and
- The availability of alternative procedures that can be used to meet the requirements of the NJ Food Code.

A food establishment manager (or the “**Person-in-Charge**”) is responsible for conducting both initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

## **RESPONSE**

The following are **temporary** alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific affected food operations after a flood.

### ***Minor Leakage***

Minor leakage accumulated from a water line or incidental water accumulation on the floor where food, utensils, equipment, clean linens, and/or single service/use items are not affected.

#### **Alternative Procedure**

- Unaffected areas of the establishment may remain open while repairs/recovery takes place. Minimize traffic from flooded areas to unaffected food areas.

### ***Major Flooding Inside the Building***

Flooding inside the building resulting from the overflow of a body of water, poor surface drainage, a major break in a water line, etc. that affects food, utensils, equipment, clean linens, or single service/use items.

#### **Alternative Procedure**

- Discontinue operation. Resume operations only after recovery steps have been completed.

## **RECOVERY**

Recovery involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a normal operation.

**A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory authority.**

**The License Holder will:**

- Sort the salvageable from the non-salvageable foods, equipment, utensils, linens, and single service items as quickly as possible.
- Properly dispose of the non-salvageable items.
- Contact the local building department and other appropriate agencies to determine if the building structure is safe and approved for occupancy.
- Provide general clean-up while ensuring worker health and safety. Clean and sanitize equipment and utensils.

For information on air quality after a flood, see the U.S. EPA publication “Fact Sheet: Flood Cleanup - Avoiding Indoor Air Quality Problems” at: <http://www.epa.gov/mold/flood/index.html>

### ***Personal Health and Safety Considerations for Employees Involved in Clean-up***

- Wear eye protection.
- Wear rubber boots that can be washed and sanitized after the event.
- Wear protective clothing such as coveralls.
- Do not allow employees to walk between the affected area and other areas of the establishment without removing footwear and protective clothing.
- Follow OSHA rules for handling detergents, sanitizers, and other chemicals used in the cleaning process.
- Handwashing – Immediately after working with contaminated materials and before engaging in food preparation activities (working with exposed food, clean equipment and utensils, unwrapped single service / use articles)
  - Double hand washing: Clean hands and exposed portions of the arms using a cleaning compound in a lavatory that is properly equipped by vigorously rubbing together the surfaces of their lathered hands and arms for at least 20 seconds and thoroughly rinsing with clean water. Repeat.
  - Dry hands using disposable towels.
  - Use a disposable towel to turn off the water to prevent re-contaminating the hands.
  - Follow-up with a food code compliant hand antiseptic.
  - Have janitorial staff clean the lavatory faucets and other portions of the lavatory after use to prevent transferring any contamination to food handlers.

### ***Clean-up***

- To prevent mold and mildew growth, conduct corrective actions within 24-48 hours after the flood waters recede.
- Remove wet materials. Dispose of any materials that cannot be effectively cleaned and sanitized. Remove any standing water.
- Unsalvageable food and all single service items, packaged or unpackaged that came in contact with flood water, must be destroyed and properly disposed.
- Floors, walls, furnishings, carpets, and equipment damaged beyond salvage must be removed and replaced as necessary. Sheet rock is especially susceptible to mold growth and should be removed and replaced if in contact with flood waters.
- Affected walls, floors, and equipment surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water, rinsed, and sanitized. Carpets should be either removed or effectively cleaned and sanitized.
- Use a detergent solution to clean floors, equipment, and other affected areas followed by a clean water rinse.
- Disinfect the floor and any other affected areas by using an EPA-registered disinfectant such as a 500 parts per million chlorine solution or other product labeled as a disinfectant. Follow manufacturer's instructions for 'disinfectant' use.
- Air-dry the affected area.

- Clean and sanitize any utensils and salvageable equipment in the affected area.
- Launder any linens or uniforms in contact with flood water. Launder separately from other linens by using bleach and/or a mechanical dryer.
- Launder or discard mop heads and other cleaning aids that contacted flood water.
- Alternative measure: Hire an outside service having expertise in cleaning and sanitizing food establishments exposed to flood water.

An establishment that utilizes a well and/or septic system that was covered by flood water must contact the health department for additional instructions.

### ***General Flood Salvage Assessment***

Flood waters may carry silt, raw sewage, oil or chemical waste that can make storm-damaged foods unsafe to eat if packaging is contaminated. Discard any food or food packaging materials that have come into contact with flood water. Very few food or beverage items can be saved after being exposed to flood water. Food items in soft packaging or with screw-top lids must be destroyed. In some cases, canned goods in metal cans or rigid plastic containers can be saved. Even so, the condition of the can is another limiting factor. The presence of rust, soil, or destroyed labeling precludes salvage. Flood water can make foods unsafe to eat, especially if the packaging is contaminated.

**Discard** the following foods if flood water has covered, splashed, dripped on or seeped into the package:

- Alcoholic Beverages: Refer to your local regulatory authority for salvage or destruction.
- Exposed Foods: bulk foods, fresh produce, meat, poultry, fish and eggs
- Any foods packaged in paper, plastic, cloth, or fiber;
- Cardboard boxes, even if the contents seem dry, including cereals, pasta products, rice, salt;
- Foods with cardboard seals, such as mayonnaise and salad dressing, or foil or cellophane packages;
- Food in glass jars, including unopened jars with waxed paper, foil, cellophane or cloth covers;
- Foods, liquids or beverages in crown-capped bottles or containers with pull-tab tops, corks or screw caps;
- All opened containers and packages; foods in bags or canisters;
- Cans that are dented, leaking, bulging or rusted; and
- Cans that have been tossed about and are far from their normal storage spot (possibility of pinholes or seam fractures).
- Cans may not be sold without all required labeling information. Therefore, cans with damaged labels should be discarded.

### ***Salvaged Goods – Reconditioning***

In some cases where the quantities of food involved are large (e.g. a large supermarket or a food warehouse), it may be feasible to attempt salvage of food items for either human or animal consumption. The salvageable items must be documented and securely moved to an approved firm that has reconditioning capability. Such activity must be coordinated with the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services Food and Drug Safety Program and the Health Department.

### ***Disposal of Food***

- Remove to a designated condemned food storage area away from food preparation and equipment storage and secured in covered refuse containers or other isolated areas to prevent either service to the public or accidental contamination of the facility and other food.
- If the food must be retained until the distributor can credit the facility, it must be clearly labeled as “not for sale” and kept in a refrigerated location separate from other food and held for credit.
- Discarded refrigerated food may be recorded by food supplier/distributor.
  
- The facility should document the type and amount of food, costs and the reason for disposal for insurance and regulatory purposes.
- Small volumes of food to be discarded can be denatured with a cleaning product (such as bleach) and placed in a covered refuse bin outside the facility.
- Large volumes of food should be stored in covered refuse containers in a secure location and disposed of by a refuse disposal company as soon as possible.
- All food waste is to be disposed of in accordance with state and local waste disposal regulations in a licensed landfill.
- Local landfills should be contacted prior to delivery of food from a private individual or carrier to insure acceptance of the waste.

### ***Equipment with waterlines***

- Take the following precautions when salvaging post-mix and beverage machines, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers, and other equipment with water connections:
  - Flush waterlines, faucet screens and waterline strainers, and purge fixtures of any standing water.
  - Discard any equipment that is damaged and can't be restored to safe sanitary standards. This may include flood-damaged wood/particle board or plastic laminate components (counters, cabinets, bars, etc.)

### ***Walk-In Cooler Restoration Guidelines***

In general, the walk-in cooler in a flooded food service facility needs to be reviewed on a case by case basis.

- If the inside of the cooler has a quarry tile floor with 6-inch sealed coving, and the floor did not flood over the coving, the interior surface can be cleaned, scrubbed, and disinfected with an EPA-registered disinfectant. Follow label use instructions for disinfecting floors. In the absence of EPA-registered product, a solution of 1 tablespoon of chlorine bleach (5.25% concentration) in 1 gallon of water may be used. Quaternary Ammonium at a concentration of 200 ppm, or other EPA-registered product should be used on equipment and structural surfaces that are salvageable.
- If the inside of the cooler has walls that sit directly on the floor, and the caulking seal is intact, the cooler walls can be cleaned, scrubbed, and disinfected with an EPA-registered disinfectant following label instructions or using 1 cup bleach (5.25% concentration) in 4 gallons of water. The walls of the cooler should be made of wood frame with closed foam insulation for this process to be successful.
- If the inside of the walk-in cooler was damaged by holes or cuts, and the flood water rose above those holes or cuts, the entire panel will need to be replaced.
- On a free-standing walk-in, the panels can be disassembled, cleaned, and sanitized to remove the silt below the panel. This would apply when the cooler wall did not have a satisfactory seal at the wall and floor juncture.
- Flooded walk-in coolers with a permeable wood floor need to have the floor replaced.
- Walk-in coolers sitting directly on the floor with an aluminum interior floor should have the floor raised and power washed below the floor to remove the river silt.
- Remediation techniques will not guarantee the absence of odors that may develop in the future.

**\*\*\*\*WARNING\*\*\*\***

**Always use extreme caution when restarting equipment with electrical components**

***Walls and Ceilings***

- If flood water soaked the sheet rock, insulation, or ceiling tiles, remove these items 30 inches above the waterline.
- Paneling may be removed and saved but you will still need to get air circulating in the wall cavities to dry the studs and sills. Wet studs and sills do not need to be replaced if allowed to dry properly. Flooded portions of studs and sills should be treated with biocides such as bleach and water.
- For paneling, carefully pry the bottom off each panel away from the wall. Use something to hold the bottom away from the sill so the cavities can be drained, cleaned, checked for molds, and dried out. You can nail them back into shape after they and the studs dry out. Remove and discard flooded insulation.
- Undamaged walls, hard surfaced floors, and other surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized with a solution of 1 tablespoon of chlorine bleach (5.25% concentration) in 1 gallon of water. Quaternary Ammonium at a concentration of 200 ppm, or other EPA-registered product should be used on surfaces that are salvageable.

- Vinyl wall covering should be removed and thrown out if soaked.

### ***Floors and Floor Coverings***

- Remove any linoleum or tile that been flooded, so you can clean and dry the wooden sub flooring. When placed on a concrete base, only loose linoleum or tile need be removed. Linoleum or vinyl tile can be saved and reused if it can be cleaned and sanitized.
- Wall-to-wall carpeting, padding and foam rubber should be thrown away if they were soaked with flood water.
- Remove tile or vinyl flooring if it is warped, loose, or has a foam-rubber pad.

### ***Duct Work***

Vents and duct work for air conditioning/heating units that were submerged in flood waters need thorough cleaning and sanitizing. If it is impossible to do this, it will be necessary to replace them. Insulation around ducts, or ducts made of compressed fiberglass will need to be replaced.

### ***Safety Guidelines for Building Entry and Occupancy***

For questions regarding building entry and occupancy, contact your local construction code office and/or your insurance agent.

## **Legal Authority**

***N.J.A.C. Chapter 24*** - Sanitation in Retail Food Establishments and Food and Beverage Vending Machines (NJ Food Code)

The following section of the NJ Food Code addresses actions to be taken by the regulatory authority and the responsibilities of the food establishment operators when an imminent health hazard occurs:

#### **8:24-8.6 Emergency Occurrences**

The operator or person in charge shall immediately take necessary remedial action and notify the health authority if an imminent health hazard may exist because of an emergency such as a fire, flood, extended interruption of electrical or water service, sewage backup, misuse of poisonous or toxic materials, onset of an apparent food borne illness outbreak, gross unsanitary occurrence or condition, or other circumstance that may endanger public health, except that the person in charge need not discontinue operations in an area of the establishment that is unaffected by the imminent health hazard.

## **2005 FDA Food Code**

The following section of the 2005 FDA Food Code addresses actions to be taken by the regulatory authority and the food establishment operators when an imminent health hazard occurs:

### **Imminent Health 8-404.11 Ceasing Operations and Reporting. Hazard**

(A) Except as specified in (B) of this section, a PERMIT HOLDER shall immediately discontinue operations and notify the REGULATORY AUTHORITY if an IMMIDENT HEALTH HAZARD may exist because of an emergency such as a fire, flood, and extended interruption of electrical or water service, SEWAGE backup, misuse of POISONOUS OR TOXIC MATERIALS, onset of an apparent foodborne illness outbreak, gross unsanitary occurrence or condition, or other circumstance that may endanger public health.

(B) A PERMIT HOLDER need not discontinue operations in an area of an establishment that is unaffected by the IMMIDENT HEALTH HAZARD.

### **8-404.12 Resumption of Operations.**

If operations are discontinued as specified under § 8-404.11 or otherwise according to LAW, the PERMIT HOLDER shall obtain approval from the REGULATORY AUTHORITY before resuming operations.

## SAMPLE EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION FORM

### Specific Emergency Contact Information

TITLE/COMPANY	NAME	PHONE NUMBER	CELL NUMBER
*Manager			
*Home Office			
*Regional Office			
*Insurance Carrier			
*Lawyer			
Bottled Water Supply			
Building Restoration			
Cable			
Commercial Ice			
Drain Cleaner			
Dry Ice			
Electrician			
Electricity			
Emergency Broadcast			
Fire Extinguisher Service			
Food Supplier			
Gas			
Janitorial Service			
Landfill			
Phone Lines			
Plumber			
Police (Non-Emergency)			

**Emergency Action Planning Guidance for Retail Food Establishments**

Portable Generator			
Radio/TV Station			
Refrigerated Truck			
Refrigeration			
Sanitation Service			
Security/Safety Specialist			
Septic Tank Service			
Sewer Authority			
Warehouse			
Waste Hauler			
Water Hauler (Licensed)			
Well Driller			

## General Emergency Contact Information Form

NAME	PHONE NUMBER
<b>*Poison Control Center</b>	<b>1-800-222-1222</b>
<b>*Police/Fire</b>	<b>911</b>
EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline	1-800-426-4791
FBI (Newark Field Office)	973-792-3000
FDA Information Hotline	1-888-723-3366
FDA (NJ District Office)	973-526-6000
NJ Department of Agriculture	609-292-3976
NJ Department of Environmental Protection	609-777-3373
NJ Department of Health & Senior Services Communicable Disease Service Food & Drug Safety Program Public Health Laboratories	1-800-367-6543 609-588-7539 609-826-4935 609-984-2200
NJ Department of Labor – Occupational Safety	609-633-3896
New Jersey Food Council	609-392-8899
New Jersey Restaurant Association	1-800-848-6368
NJ Office of Emergency Management	1-866-472-3365
U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention	1-800-311-3435
USDA/FSIS Hotline	215-597-4219 1-800-233-3935

## Resources

### **Online Resources**

There are many excellent on-line resources available for both regulatory and industry to utilize. Most of the state websites have emergency guidance as well as some of the state restaurant associations.

\*It is important to note that the resources listed on this document are just a small sample of those that are available for both regulatory and industry. You may find other guidance that is more suitable for your organizational needs.

### **US Government Resources**

- Consult <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/>

US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service for guidance on disaster response, and food safety during emergencies regarding meat, poultry and egg products

- Consult <http://www.fda.gov/>

US Food and Drug Administration for guidance on disaster response in regards to all other food products and for science-based information on food safety for retail and food service industries.

- Consult <http://www.epa.gov>

US Environmental Protection Agency for guidance on disaster response in regards to potable water supply, wastewater and soil erosion and contamination.

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/>

<http://www.foodsafety.gov>

<http://www.fema.gov/>

### **New Jersey Resources**

<http://nj.gov/health/foodanddrugsafety>

<http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture>

<http://www.state.nj.us/dep>

[http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lsse/safetyhealth\\_index.html](http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lsse/safetyhealth_index.html)

<http://www.njfoodcouncil.com>

<http://www.njra.org>

### **Other Resources**

<http://redcross.org/>

<http://www.neha.org/>

<http://www.naccho.org/toolbox/> - Emergency Readiness for Food Workers and Emergency Readiness for Food Managers (to find documents, search "emergency readiness")

## **Check List for Product Safety**

### Steps and Signs to Look for During a Power Outage and/or Flood

1. Verify how long the power was off.
2. Document how long was the power off before the generators came on.
3. Were the refrigerators/freezers opened during the power outage? Was the temperature recorded (recommend every 2 hours)?
4. Look for signs of water damage/flooding.
5. Check for visible signs of product and packaging integrity issues, leaking cans, rust damage, swells, off odors, etc.
6. Determine current temperatures and any prior abuse to the product.

### **Recommendations by product type:**

1. **Refrigerated product on the sales floor:** Check the temperature of the cases and the internal temperature of various product types (meat, dairy, etc.). If the product has been above 41°F – **IT MUST BE DISCARDED, NO EXCEPTIONS**. Make sure you keep in mind the length of time between the loss of refrigeration (rise in product temperatures) and when the refrigeration temperature was restored (return to refrigeration temperatures) in identifying potentially hazardous products that have been temperature abused.
2. **Frozen Product on the sales floor:** After a thorough inspection of all products; if it is somewhat thawed or soft, it can be refrozen. If the product has thawed completely, **IT MUST BE DISCARDED, NO EXCEPTIONS**.
3. **Canned or packaged product:** If the product or packaging has been damaged and/or absorbed water/moisture, **IT MUST BE DISCARDED, NO EXCEPTIONS**. If the cans leak or the labeling has been damaged or if they swell or bulge, **IT MUST BE DISCARDED, NO EXCEPTIONS**. Cans that are kept must be cleaned and sanitized prior to being sold.
4. **Refrigerated product in a department cooler:** If the internal temperature of the product is above 41°F for more than four hours, **IT MUST BE DISCARDED, NO EXCEPTIONS**.
5. **Frozen product in a department freezer:** Product that is kept in an insulated freezer and not disturbed should be satisfactory for about two days. The key element to determine this is the stage in the thawing process when the power came back on. If the product has been thawed completely, it can be transferred to a refrigerated case (if applicable) or it can be

further processed provided it meets criteria #4. If it is beginning to get soft or minimally thawed, it can be refrozen. Otherwise, **IT MUST BE DISCARDED.**

## **FAQs Regarding Boil Water Advisories**

### **1. What is the proper way to disinfect my water so that it is safe to drink?**

The preferred method of treatment is boiling. Boiling water kills harmful bacteria and parasites (freezing will not disinfect water). Bring water to a full rolling boil for at least 1 minute (5 minutes in food service establishment) to kill most infectious organisms. For areas without power, add 8 drops, about 1/4 teaspoon, of unscented household bleach per gallon of water.

### **2. How should I wash my hands during a “boil water” advisory?**

Based on the current conditions of the affected public water supplies, vigorous hand washing with soap and your tap water is safe for basic personal hygiene. If you are washing your hands to prepare food, if at all possible, you should use boiled (then cooled) water or bottled water with hand washing soap.

### **3. Is potentially contaminated water (where *Cryptosporidium* is not the significant contaminant) safe for washing dishes or clothes?**

Yes, if you rinse hand-washed dishes for a minute in a bleach solution (1 tablespoon bleach per gallon of water). Allow dishes to completely air dry. Most household dishwashers do not reach the proper temperature to sanitize dishes. It is safe to wash clothes in tap water.

### **4. Is potentially contaminated water safe for bathing and shaving?**

The water may be used for showering, baths, shaving and washing, so long as care is taken not to swallow or allow water in eyes or nose or mouth. Children and disabled individuals should have their bath supervised to ensure water is not ingested. The time spent bathing should be minimized. Though the risk of illness is minimal, individuals who have recent surgical wounds, are immunosuppressed, or have a chronic illness may want to consider using bottled or boiled water for cleansing until the advisory is lifted.

### **5. How should I wash fruit and vegetables and make ice?**

Fruits and vegetables should be washed with boiled (then cooled) water or bottled water or water sanitized with 8 drops (about 1/4 teaspoon) of unscented household bleach per gallon of water. Ice should be made with boiled water, bottled water or sanitized water.

### **6. What if I have already consumed potentially contaminated water?**

Even if someone has consumed potentially contaminated water from either a public water system or a private well before they were aware of the boil water advisory, the likelihood of becoming ill is low. Anyone experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, with or without fever, should seek medical attention.

### **7. What infectious organisms might be present in contaminated water?**

Disease transmission from contaminated water occurs principally by ingesting water. The major organisms of concern are protozoa such as *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*, and bacteria such as *Shigella*, *E. coli* and viruses. These organisms primarily affect the

gastrointestinal system, causing diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, and vomiting with or without fever. Most of these illnesses are not usually serious or life threatening except in the elderly, the very young or those who are immunocompromised.