

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** All Owners/Operators of Food Premises in the area served by Peterborough Public Health  
**From:** Environmental Health, Peterborough Public Health  
**Date:** May 22, 2022  
**Subject:** Power Outage Guidance and Precautions

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The City of Peterborough and surrounding areas were hit hard by the deadly storm that crossed Ontario yesterday. We are aware of widespread power outages that may last for several days. Power outages come with significant concerns and considerations for food safety. Please help us protect our community and prevent foodborne illness.

### Refrigerator & Freezer Precautions

- Keep all fridges and freezers closed for as long as possible. If you have external thermometers, monitor as frequently as possible. If your indicating thermometers are inside the unit, quickly check and record the temperature every two hours. Write down the time that the power went off, and the time and temperature for the checks of all temperature-controlled units.
- Hazardous food that is in the refrigerator **must be discarded** once the temperature has risen above 4°C (40°F) for more than 2 hours. Remember – food that is unsafe to eat may still look and smell normal. Potentially hazardous food includes food in a form or state that is capable of supporting the growth of infectious or toxigenic micro-organisms and which requires time and temperature control to limit such growth.
- When the power comes back on, be aware of how food is stored in the refrigerator. If there were any ready to eat foods stored below raw foods, they must be discarded because there is a higher likelihood of dripping and cross-contamination.
- Potentially hazardous food in a freezer that has *partially* thawed may safely be refrozen. The quality of the food item may be impacted, but the food will still be safe. If an item has fully thawed and has been at room temperature for more than 2 hours, it **must be discarded**.
- You may consider transferring hazardous food items from the refrigerator to a cooler with ice. But, the ice must be replaced frequently to keep food cold and you must put a thermometer in the cooler and monitor/record the time and temperature every 2 hours.
- Open bunkers or display units may be covered with a tarp or blanket to help extend the temperature-holding capability.

### Equipment Precautions

- Food preparation for the public can only occur when all requirements of the food premises regulation are met. This means, that in order to be open to serve the public the premises must:
  - Have adequate lighting
  - Have adequate ventilation
  - Have hot and cold running water under pressure
  - Be free of any other hazards that could put the public at risk
- If you do not have power, your premises must be closed to the public and no food preparation should be occurring.

- Avoid cooking indoors with equipment that expels carbon monoxide such as camp stoves and charcoal grills; these items should only be used outdoors, away from windows.
- Do not use gas stoves unless there is proper electric ventilation working as these stoves also emit carbon monoxide.
- Portable generators should only be used outdoors, in a well-ventilated area away from windows and fresh air intakes. Do not connect a generator to your electrical panel directly unless this has been previously setup by a qualified electrician.

#### Water and Sewage Services

- If you are on a municipal water supply and wastewater services, then you likely do not have anything to worry about. Contact the local utility directly if you have any questions.
- If you are on a well, you may not have water due to pump failure (caused by the power outage). If this is the case, **you are not permitted to be open.**
  - Once the power is restored, confirm that all pumps and treatment devices have resumed normal operation. Once the treatment has been restored, flush the plumbing and/or distribution system as untreated water may have entered the system. If your system uses chlorine, verify that the chlorine residual has been restored throughout the plumbing/distribution system. Collect water samples for bacteriological analysis as soon as possible once the power has been restored from appropriate locations throughout the system.
- If you are on a septic system, limit the amount of wastewater that you are generating. Keep an eye on the level of sewage in any pump chambers and septic tanks. If they are getting full, call a sewage hauler to have the tanks pumped. In the event you have a sewage backup into your facility or you observe breakout of sewage onto your property, call a sewage hauler and immediately pump your septic tank and any pump chambers. Any food items that come into contact with sewage must be discarded immediately.

We trust that you will follow your own emergency response plans for a power outage and take all precautions necessary to protect your staff and customers. Foodborne illness is a serious matter and can be devastating for those affected, including the business. If you have any questions or concerns related to food safety, please contact our office at (705) 743-1000. There is an inspector on call 24/7 who can support you. If you call outside of regular business hours, follow the instructions on the recording to reach the afterhours Public Health Inspector.

Thank you so much for your diligence in this most recent emergency situation.

#### **Environmental Health Team – Food Safety**



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