Power Outages at Food Facilities

If your facility has had a power outage, ALL refrigerated and frozen food will need to be assessed. During regular operating conditions potentially hazardous food should be stored at 4° Celsius or less to prevent growth of bacteria and spoilage. However, during a power outage, cooling units cannot maintain this temperature indefinitely. Potentially hazardous food that has reached a temperature of 4° Celsius will need to be discarded.

You must monitor temperatures using thermometers and determine how long your power outage lasted:
- Refrigerated foods must be under 4° Celsius and frozen food must be at -18° Celsius or less.
- A full chest freezer will keep food frozen for up to 2 days
- A half-full chest freezer will keep food frozen for up to 1 day
- A cooler or fridge will keep food cold for 4 hours.

If you don’t have a thermometer or if you don’t know how long your fridge or freezer was without power, check the products in the fridge for spoilage and souring. Look for:
- Milk and other dairy products that have spoiled/become sour. Spoiled dairy products are a good indicator that the fridge has been off and all food should be discarded.
- Ice cream that has thawed and refrozen is a good indicator that the freezer has been off.
- Fish product that smells bad upon thawing is also a sign that food in your freezer has thawed and refrozen.
- Frozen foods that have thawed must be discarded as they may no longer be safe to eat. Once thawed, food should not be refrozen.
- Food in the freezer that has (or may have) reached 4° Celsius or warmer should be discarded and must not be refrozen.

If food has been lost as a result of a power outage, operators may wish to contact their insurance company to determine if it is covered. Make a list of items discarded and photograph those items (if possible) for insurance purposes.

IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT

Please check the Interior Health website for more Emergency Information.

If you have questions contact your Environmental Health Officer.