

Flood Information for Food Premises

The best way to minimize flood damage is to take precautions ahead of time, especially if your business is located in a flood-prone area. Remember that floodwaters are very dirty and items in contact with floodwaters should be handled properly. Flooding may result in the loss of power, loss of a safe water supply and cause sewer back-ups.



Food premises that have been impacted by the effects of flooding cannot operate until authorized to do so by an Environmental Health Officer

PREPARING FOR A FLOOD

Develop an emergency response plan to anticipate problems and possible solutions to help protect your facility and reduce damage to equipment, inventory and operation.

WHEN A FLOOD IS ANTICIPATED

Reduce inventory of supplies to minimal levels to reduce losses.

Equipment and Supplies

Move as much as possible to a secure area above the anticipated flood level or to an off-site location, including:

- Inventory (food, paper goods, linens, etc.).
- Operational documents.
- Chemicals such as pesticides, cleaning agents and sanitizers.
- Furnishings.
- Equipment.

Utilities

- Safeguard electrical, natural gas or propane heating equipment. If there is time, consult your supplier for instructions.
- Turn off the furnace, the outside natural gas valve and the electricity. Know how to do this properly and safely. Call your utility providers or an electrician if you need help.

AFTER THE FLOOD

Floodwaters are likely to be polluted with sewage and other contaminants, and are a health and safety threat to everyone in the flooded area. Proper cleanup is important!

- Restore your facility as soon as possible to minimize further damage.
- Wear personal protective equipment, such as a face mask, gloves and rubber boots.
- Enter a damaged building only after it has been assessed and cleared of hazards.

Before Re-entering your Food Premises

- Return to your facility when notified by the local Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
- Check your building for structural safety before entering. Call your municipal engineering or building department for an inspection before re-entering or follow directions from the local EOC.
- Call your electricity provider or have an electrician inspect and check for electrical hazards before you enter your facility, especially if the electricity was not shut off before evacuation.
- Leave immediately if you smell gas or suspect a leak. Call Fortis Gas at 1 (800) 663-9911, or the local fire department. Do not re-enter until you are told it is safe.

Re-entering your facility

- Avoid wading through standing water as it may contain unseen hazards.
- Do not turn on the main gas valve. The main gas valve must be turned on by a licensed gas service technician.
- Do not use flooded appliances (gas/electric), electrical outlets, switch boxes or fuse-breaker panels until your local utility or other qualified personnel have checked them.
- Do not use gas or electrical heating systems until they have been thoroughly inspected by a qualified technician.

Ensure that a safe and operable water and waste disposal system is in place

- If you hold a permit as a water operator, please refer to the document “Information for Water Suppliers Impacted by Emergencies” Find the document at:
https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/Emergency/Wildfires/Documents/HP-WQ-9089_Water%20Suppliers%20Impacted%20by%20Emergency%20Events.pdf
- Once you have access to a safe supply of water, clean internal water lines by turning on the taps and allowing the water to run for a minute or two.
- Ensure that municipal waste systems are operational and if you are on a septic system that might have been impacted by a flood, have it assessed by an Authorized Person (AP). See <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/HBE/Pages/Onsite-Sewerage-Systems.aspx> for more information on finding an AP.

Cleaning and Sanitizing your Establishment and Equipment

You should not clean your premises until you have a safe supply of water and a functioning waste disposal system. The basic steps to cleaning up after a flood involve: removing standing water and mud, tearing out any drywall and/or insulation (if soaked/damaged); then cleaning and disinfecting. The physical structure should be dried quickly in order to minimize the growth of bacteria and mould.

Consider hiring a professional restoration company. Check with your insurance provider regarding coverage.

(a) Physical facility

Interior surfaces (floors, walls, and ceilings)

- Remove all water, mud and other debris.
- Break out the walls and remove drywall, wood paneling and insulation at a level of at least 50 cm (20 inches) above the high water line.
- Before cleaning floors, remove and discard flooded carpets and underlay.
- Wash all surfaces using soap and water, then rinse and sanitize.
- Sanitize using a chlorine solution. Mix by adding 200mL of household bleach to 5 litres of water, or use a commercial sanitizer.

- Increase ventilation and decrease humidity by opening windows and doors.

Pest control

- Remove pests. Wash and sanitize surfaces which may have been contaminated.
- Seal all openings into the facility to prevent entry of pests.

Exhaust systems, hoods, HVAC systems (submerged in floodwater)

- Remove debris. Clean and sanitize.
- Remove and replace ventilation systems that cannot be cleaned and sanitized.

(b) Equipment

Equipment and appliances should be inspected by a qualified technician to ensure they are operational. Always use extreme caution when restarting equipment with electrical components.

Clean equipment with soap and water, or as directed by the equipment manufacturer. Follow with a rinse using clean water, and then sanitize equipment and food contact surfaces using chlorine bleach at a concentration of 1 tsp (5 mL) per 4 cups (1 L) water, or another approved sanitizer. This is a weaker bleach solution than required for disinfecting larger surfaces exposed to floodwaters.

Equipment with waterlines (post-mix and beverage machines, coffee/tea urns, ice machine, glass washer, dishwasher and other equipment with water connections)

- Replace all ice machine filters and beverage dispenser filters and flush all waterlines, including steam water lines and ice machine water lines for 10-15 minutes.
- Flush, wash and sanitize faucet screens and waterline strainers.
- Purge fixtures of any standing water.
- Clean and sanitize all fixtures, sinks and equipment.

Dishwashers

- Check the detergent level and sanitizer supply (for low-temp machines).
- Before use, run the empty dishwasher through the wash-rinse-sanitize cycle three times to flush the water lines and ensure the machine is sanitized internally.

Utensils, ceramic dishes, metal pots:

- Wash and rinse dishes, pots and utensils to remove mud and debris.
- Wash, rinse and sanitize using a dishwasher or 3 compartment sink method.

Alternatively, sanitize:

- Silverware and metal pots by submerging them in boiling water for 10 minutes; and
- Ceramic dishes and enamelware using a chlorine to water solution of 1 tsp (5 mL) per 4 cups (1 L) water.

Refrigeration equipment

- Wash, rinse and sanitize the interior and exterior.
- Equipment should be inspected by a qualified technician before using.
- Ensure equipment can maintain an internal temperature of 4°C or colder.
- If there has been an extended power outage, or if flood water came in contact with the equipment, seek advice on repair or replacement from your insurance provider.

Ice machines

- Clean and sanitize the interior surfaces (ice making compartment/storage bin).
- Run the ice through 3 cycles and discard the ice with each cycle.

Furniture and paper products

- Discard upholstered furniture (chairs, bar stools, benches, etc.).
- Discard books and paper (including paper napkins).
- Discard tables and booths that cannot be cleaned and sanitized.

(c) Food Products

Very few food or beverage items can be saved after being exposed to flood water. In some cases, canned goods in metal cans or rigid plastic containers can be saved (but cannot be resold if the label is detached). See Food Safety after a Flood (<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/Emergency/FloodsLandslides/Documents/After%20Flood%20-%20Food%20Safety.pdf>).

WHAT TO DISCARD?

Discard:

All food and packaging materials exposed to flood water such as:

- Food that is not in a waterproof container.
- Cans that are dented, leaking, bulging, or rusted.
- Food in containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped-caps, and pull-tops (including liquor).

Container and utensils contaminated by floodwater must be thrown out such as:

- Plastic knives, forks and spoons, stir sticks, drinking straws, etc..
- Take-out food and beverage containers (pizza boxes, Styrofoam containers, cups, paper napkins, etc.).

Refrigerated and frozen foods exposed to flood waters.

- If there was a power outage during the flood event, review additional food safety precautions and practices as outlined in the Power Outages at Food Facilities document (<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/Emergency/Wildfires/Documents/After%20Fire-Power%20Outages%20at%20Food%20Facilities.pdf>)

“IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT”