



**Town of Harwich
Board of Health**
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With the potential for both hurricanes and winter storms on Cape Cod, power outages are likely at your establishments and now is the time to get a plan in place that you can share with your staff.

We encourage you to purchase a generator if you have not already done so, to prevent any loss of product. If this is something that is not feasible for your establishment to do currently, we are recommending that you purchase a temp tracker. These temperature monitoring sensors will monitor freezers, walk-in coolers and other equipment around the clock and alert you if the temps fall into the danger zone. There are models that are affordable for restaurants with a range of budgets.

In the event of a bad hurricane season, we urge you to take the time to create your personal power outage plan and share with your staff. Here are a few quick tips:

4 hours in a refrigerator / 48 hours in a full freezer / 24 hours in a half-full freezer

Before: Keep thermometers in all refrigeration and freezer units. Have a cooler with frozen gel packs and/or ice blocks handy.

During: Keep cooler doors closed. If the power has been out for 4 hours, food needs to be kept at 40°F and kept in coolers with ice at this point.

After: Check the temperature of food and throw out anything above 40°F. You can safely refreeze or cook thawed frozen food that still contains ice crystals or is at 40°F or below.

Throw out perishable food from refrigerator that comes below temperature: meat, fish, cut fruits & veggies, eggs, milk, and leftovers. Throw out anything with an unusual odor, color, or texture.

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

CDC for Food Safety Tips: [Food Safety for Power Outages | Food Safety | CDC](#)
Hurricanes: Health and Safety: <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/public-health-focus/hurricanes-health-and-safety>



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Power Outage Plan

When you run a restaurant on Cape Cod, you must be ready for power outages. If you plan and know what to do, you can minimize the risk of losing your product or potentially serving an unsafe product to your customers.

For a complete emergency action plan for Retail Food establishments, please visit:
<http://www.foodprotect.org/media/guide/Emergency%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Retail%20Food%20Est.pdf>

Before the Outage

- Do some research into buying an electrical generator. Even a small generator to keep your POS system or refrigeration units online can be very helpful in the short term.
- Keep appliance thermometers in all refrigerators and freezers. The refrigerator should be at 40°F or below. The freezer should be at 0°F or below.
- Have a cooler and frozen gel packs handy in case you must remove your food from the refrigerator to keep it cold.
- Buy dry ice or block ice to keep your food cold in the refrigerator, if you think the power will be out for a long time.
- Having access to emergency phone numbers (including the health department) written out on paper and stored in an easy-to-find place in your office is crucial when systems go down.
- Train your entire staff in their role if the power ever goes out during their shift.
- Keep emergency flashlights in the building. Keep battery powered table lighting as back-ups.
- Create an emergency menu— these should be dishes that you can make easily without your appliances but with the ingredients usually present in your kitchen.

During the Outage

- Immediately throw out any food, especially meat that is in the process of cooking but hasn't reached its safe cooking temperature at the time of the power disruption.
- It is critical to always have proper ventilation in your restaurant, so if your exhaust system has stopped due to the power being out, have your kitchen staff turn off all cooking equipment right away.
- Make note of the time when the power turned off, so you have a good sense of how long ingredients went without being properly refrigerated.

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed if possible. If the doors stay closed, food will stay safe for up to **4 hours in a refrigerator; 48 hours in a full freezer; 24 hours in a half-full freezer.**
- If the power has been out for 4 hours, and a cooler and ice are available, put refrigerated perishable foods in the cooler. To keep them at 40°F or below, add ice or a cold source like frozen gel packs.
- When it should already be organized so it's on the lowest shelves, make sure all raw meat in your walk-in and freezer is separated from the other ingredients. That way, if the meat does spoil or leak, you don't contaminate your fresh produce and other food.
- Use that emergency menu mentioned above as an alternative for guests waiting in the restaurant.

After the Outage

- After the power comes back on, note the time again and calculate how long it's been out. This, and the current temperature of the food in your walk-in, will determine if you can salvage your stock.
- Discard refrigerated perishable food such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers after **4 hours** without power.
- **If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40° F or below, it is safe to refreeze or cook.** If the power was out for no more than 4 hours, refrigerated food should be safe if the doors were kept closed.
- If it's been two hours or less, the food in your walk-in *should* be fine to use, regardless of temperature, if it was already being stored at a proper temperature at the time the power went out. Just make sure to use it as quickly as possible. (For added safety, take extra care to check raw meat for signs of going bad. Any foul odor? Is it slimy to the touch? When in doubt, it's better to throw it out.)
- If it's been two to four hours, you can still use food that is at 50° F or lower. It is recommended to do so immediately, without freezing or refreezing it.
- If it's been more than four hours, only use food if it's at 45° F or lower.
- Frozen food that's developed freezer burn from being defrosted and then refrozen should be tossed out for quality.
- Only reopen your restaurant after all unsafe foods have been discarded, your walk-ins are at least 45° F, all circuit breakers are reset properly, the ventilation system is turned back on, and hot water is available (for washing hands and dishes).

If the health department has closed your establishment after the outage, wait for their say-so to reopen.

If you haven't already, please submit a copy of your establishment's power outage plan to the Harwich Health Department. Please contact us with any questions at 508.430.7509 health@harwich-ma.gov