

Food Facilities and Flooding

Flooding can interrupt power and damage property. Floodwater may damage records, equipment, and food inventory, as well as cause structural damage. Below are some helpful tips to assist you before, during and after a flood.

Before a Flood

1. Remove or elevate vital records, equipment and food to protect from water damage and contamination.
2. Protect any openings with sandbags at doors.
3. Post a temporarily closed sign on door.
4. Secure all cash, turn off equipment and any natural gas lines.
5. Be certain that all refrigerated units are equipped with accurate thermometers. Develop an evacuation plan for staff and guests. This plan should include notification protocols and emergency routes.

During a Flood

1. If there are floodwaters and/or backup of sewage into the facility, cease operations and close the facility until repairs are made and the facility has been cleaned and sanitized.
2. Prevent any unnecessary personnel from walking in floodwaters or sewage backup to prevent the spread of dangerous bacteria to skin, clothing, or other areas in the facility.
3. Discontinue use of toilets, sinks, or equipment that may cause additional backup.
4. Do not prepare food while drains are not functioning.

Re-opening after a Flood

1. Inspection

It is the responsibility of the manager or facility operator to conduct a complete self-inspection of their facility after a flood. The manager or facility operator of impacted facilities should contact our Division to conduct an inspection of the facility prior resuming operation.

2. Sanitizing

Proper decontamination must be conducted to eliminate potential food safety risk.

Decontamination and sanitization should be used on equipment and structural surfaces that are salvageable. Proper sanitization methods include:

- a. Chlorine bleach at a concentration of 100-200 ppm (approximately one tablespoon of bleach in one gallon of potable water); or
- b. Quaternary ammonium at a concentration of 200 ppm.

Grounded in Health

3. Damaged Food Products

- a. Discard and remove all food and packaging materials that may have been submerged in flood waters or affected by moisture unless the food is sealed in a hermetically sealed container that has not been damaged.
- b. Destroy refrigerated and frozen foods which have completely thawed or have spent an unknown amount of time in refrigerators without power. If in doubt, throw it out.
- c. Inspect canned foods and discard any damaged cans.
- d. Do not keep products in containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped-caps (soda pop bottles), twist-caps, flip-tops, snap-opens, and similar type closures that have been submerged in flood waters.
- e. Do not salvage food packed in plastic, paper, cardboard, cloth, and similar containers that have been water damaged or may have absorbed moisture.
- f. Save undamaged, commercially prepared foods in all-metal cans or retort pouches. If you remove labels that can come off, thoroughly wash the cans, rinse them, and then disinfect them with a sanitizing solution. Re-label containers that had the labels removed, including the expiration date, with a marker.

4. Physical Facilities

- a. If you have a water well that has been flooded, ensure it is super-chlorinated (shocked) and tested to confirm it is safe after floodwaters recede. Further information on water well treatment is available at www.kernpublichealth.com.
- b. Thoroughly wash all interior surfaces (e.g., floors, walls, and ceilings) within the affected facility using potable water with a hot detergent solution. Rinse surfaces free of detergents and residues, and treat with a sanitizing solution.
- c. Structural components of the building (e.g., walls, piping, ceiling, and HVAC system/ventilation systems) affected by flood waters should be cleaned, repaired, and disinfected, where possible, to prevent mold. Permits from local building departments should also be obtained, if applicable.
- d. Remove and destroy all absorbent materials, such as carpet, drywall, etc. that have been water damaged.
- e. Dry all remaining structural components as quickly as possible. Do not close in any new construction until the structural components are dry.

5. Equipment

- a. Run the empty dishwasher through the wash-rinse-sanitize cycle three times to flush the water lines and clean and sanitize the dishwasher inside before washing equipment and utensils in it.
- b. Thoroughly clean and sanitize all sinks before using them.
- c. Use a commercial dishwasher or three compartment sinks to wash, rinse, and sanitize equipment and utensils, using potable water.

- d. Clear refrigeration units, like coolers and freezers, of all contaminated food products. Clean and sanitize refrigeration units.
- e. Check insulation of refrigeration units for flood damage.
- f. Discard equipment that has been damaged beyond repair.
- g. Thoroughly clean and sanitized all countertops and equipment, including ice machines, food contact surfaces, and non-food contact surfaces.
- h. Verify that all refrigerated and freezer display cases, walk-in refrigerators, and walk-in freezers are capable of consistently maintaining cold holding temperatures before replacement food items are placed in the units.
- i. Verify that all equipment used for food preparation (e.g., cooking, cooling, and reheating) is functioning properly.
- j. Ensure handwashing sinks are operational, stocked with hand soap and paper towels, and accessible.

6. Pest Control

- a. Verify that you do not have a pest infestation.
- b. If you are having pest issues, contact your certified pest control company to conduct a sanitary survey and address the infestation prior to reopening.

To receive the most current information on potential flooding, subscribe to ReadyKern emergency alerts at www.readykern.com.