

# Food *for thought*

Winter 2022

A newsletter for Fairfax County food establishment owners and operators and their employees

## Are You Ready for An Emergency?

### *What to do during an electrical outage*

What would you do if your food establishment were flooded? What if a tornado tore through your neighborhood? What about a fire? How long will the power be out? Is that gas you smell? Nobody wants to think about these types of circumstances, but they do happen.

**In this article we will focus specifically on electrical outages:** In the event of a power outage, the establishment should voluntarily close. Notify the Health Department of the closure by calling 703-246-2201, TTY 711. An electrical power outage will affect the safe storage of refrigerated and frozen foods. Perishable food, such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk and eggs that are not kept properly refrigerated or frozen, may cause illness if eaten.

To protect these foods from spoiling:

- Keep a digital dial, or instant-read thermometer inside refrigerators and freezers to accurately monitor the temperatures until the power is restored.
- Refrigerator and freezer doors must be kept closed as much as possible to maintain the cold

temperature. The refrigerator will keep foods cold for 2-4 hours if the door is unopened. Full freezers will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours if the door remains closed.

These temperatures may vary depending on the age of the unit, temperature setting and amount of food that is inside the refrigerator as well as the temperature outside.

- Foods that are above 41 F for more than 2 hours must be discarded. Don't trust your sense of smell – food may be unsafe even if it doesn't smell bad.
- Thawed food may be used if it is still below 41 F or it may be re-frozen if it is below 41 F. Partial thawing and refreezing may reduce the quality of some food, but the food will remain safe.
- Follow the **Golden Rule** of food safety, "**When in Doubt, Throw it Out,**" for any foods that you are not sure have stayed at a safe temperature.

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## No Bare Hand Contact with Ready-to-Eat Foods

Ready-to-eat (RTE) food is ready to be consumed and does not require any additional heat treatment steps to make it safe. Food that typically should be cooked further to render it safe, such as a rare hamburger or a sauce containing raw eggs, can also be considered ready-to-eat provided the consumer has been advised of the potential risks with a consumer advisory.

Food that is ready-to-eat may become contaminated by food handlers' bare hands. Even properly washed hands can contaminate foods. **Although thorough and frequent handwashing can reduce this risk, it does not eliminate it.**

- Wear clean, single use disposable gloves when conducting bulk food preparation of produce and other foods that will not be cooked or heated prior to service.
- Wear gloves when assembling sandwiches, burgers, sushi, burritos or when dispensing or

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## Winter is HERE – Prevent Norovirus Illness

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus and is a leading cause of acute gastroenteritis (inflammation of the stomach and intestines) in the United States. The virus is usually spread by the fecal–oral route by contaminated food and water or person-to-person contact. It may also spread through contaminated surfaces or through the air. Norovirus is very contagious because it only takes a small number of viral particles (fewer than 100) to make you sick. Symptoms of norovirus can include abdominal cramps, nausea, diarrhea and vomiting.

How does this relate to a food operation? **Infected workers may frequently be a cause of norovirus outbreaks in food service settings.** When a person is sick with norovirus, he or she will contaminate his or her surroundings, including other co-workers, surfaces and the foods they handle.

Steps that can be taken to prevent an outbreak include:

- **Training and monitoring employees:** A good preventive measure against spreading the virus is an effective employee health policy and training. Food service employees must be trained to report to their manager when they have vomiting, or have diarrhea, jaundice, sore throat with fever or infected lesions. This training should be part of the illness policy, and all employees should be aware of their responsibility. It is important not to work while sick and to manage employees effectively when they return to work.
- **Adequate handwashing:** All employees especially those returning to work after a norovirus illness should understand the importance of handwashing in conjunction with proper glove use to prevent the spread of disease.
- **Cleaning and sanitizing:** If a norovirus infection is suspected, it is important to conduct a thorough and daily cleaning of all surfaces that your guests and associates touch, such as door handles, drinking fountains, kitchen equipment, counters, condiments stands, etc.
- **Proper clean up procedure when vomiting or diarrhea occurs:** Have a biohazard clean up kit in place in your facility and conduct periodic training with your staff on proper procedures in using the cleanup kit. Ensure that regularly used cleaning equipment from the kitchen, like brooms and mops, are not used—not only will these also become contaminated, but they will send norovirus particles into the air.

For more information on Norovirus and its prevention visit the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html).

## The PLUS YouTube Channel is Here

Fairfax County provides helpful and informative guidance for using the new Planning and Land Use System (PLUS). Learn more by subscribing to the PLUS YouTube channel ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYR9xZ6V9-aVFUWr4yipN\\_Q/featured](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYR9xZ6V9-aVFUWr4yipN_Q/featured)) to receive notifications of PLUS training videos when they are posted.

Select the red **SUBSCRIBE** button on the top right of the page.

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serving utensils cannot be used. Always wash hands prior to putting on gloves.

- Use dispensing utensils such as forks, tongs, deli paper, toothpicks, etc., to place prepared foods onto plates, into bowls, glasses or cups.

**Please do your part to keep the food safe and prevent foodborne illness for a healthy community.**

## Active Managerial Control Awards

Congratulations to the food service operators who were recognized with an



Active Managerial Control award over the last three-month period! During their recent inspections, there were no violations cited and it was observed that good active managerial controls were in place. Congratulations to:

- **Luis Martinez**, *Cross Roads, 13891 Metrotech Dr., Chantilly, VA*
- **Marisol Quinones**, *Five Guys Burgers and Fries, 10940 Fairfax Blvd., Fairfax, VA*
- **Timothy Makel**, *Honey Baked Ham # 8505, 1480 North Point Village Dr., Reston, VA*
- **Sufian Ahmed**, *Wendy's # 6639, 10695 Braddock Rd., Fairfax, VA*

See pictures and read details about how they are reducing the risk of foodborne illness in their food establishment on the Health Department website [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/food/awards-programs/active-managerial-control](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/food/awards-programs/active-managerial-control). If you have questions about active managerial control in your food establishment, please speak to your area Environmental Health Specialist.

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- When the electricity comes back on, contact the Health Department to let them know that the establishment has re-opened.

Visit <https://www.fda.gov/food/recalls-outbreaks-emergencies/food-safety-during-emergencies> for more information on food service emergency planning. **The key to surviving an emergency is to be prepared.**

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