

Food Safety Scoop



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This newsletter is brought to you by the Yavapai County Food Safety Industry Council, which is a joint collaboration between Yavapai County Community Health Services and the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension.

The FSIC meets bimonthly to discuss issues in the food service industry and ways to bring food safety information to the public.

For more information, please call 928-445-6590 ext.227 or visit our website at: [Yavapai County Cooperative Extension: https://yavapai-county-cooperative-extension.arizona.edu/yavapai](https://yavapai-county-cooperative-extension.arizona.edu/yavapai)

Brought to you by the Yavapai County Food Safety Industry Council

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Cold Facts!

A refrigerator is one of the most important pieces of equipment for keeping food safe. We are often reminded of its importance when we lose power or the unit fails. The result could be a loss of thousands of dollars in wasted products, loss of business due to a temporary shut-down and costs incurred from a repair bill.

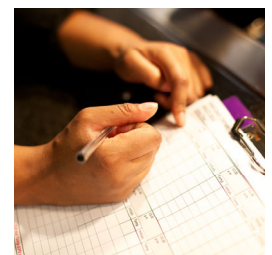
Luckily, most breakdowns of commercial refrigeration equipment can be prevented with simple regular maintenance. The best way to stay on top of your preventative maintenance needs is to keep a to-do list, a task that can be simplified by breaking the list down into a daily/weekly and monthly/quarterly maintenance checklists.

Regular maintenance combined with close monitoring of safe refrigerator temperatures through the use of thermometers and temperature logs is crucial for proper cold holding of TCS (Time/Temperature Control for Safety) foods.

Daily/Weekly Maintenance Checklist:

- **Check Temperatures/Record** - Set the temperature of a refrigerator at 40°F or slightly below. If temperature is set too high, your food will spoil. If the temperature is set lower than necessary, the unit works harder than it needs and can shorten the life of your equipment. Record temperatures daily on a log.
- **Clear Space Around Equipment** - Keep air flowing around unit by removing debris. Lack of air flow can put a strain on your unit causing it to run inefficiently and overheat.
- **Lights Off In Walk-In Coolers And Freezers!** - Not only will leaving lights on increase your electric bill, but they actually generate heat that forces your equipment to work harder to keep cool.
- **Clean The Inside Of All Units** - Remember not to use steel wool, bleach or caustic chemicals which can damage the finish. Consult the owner's manual for instructions.
- **Check for Cold Air Leaks** - Hinges, latches and gaskets that are in poor condition will cause your unit not to seal properly. Test the door gasket by closing a dollar bill in the door. You should feel some resistance when you pull on it; if it slides out easily, the door is not sealing properly. Call a professional for advice and repair.

Sample temperatures logs available for print can be found at:
Food Safety Plan: <https://www.yavapaiaz.gov/Portals/39/Forms/FoodSafetyPlan.pdf>



Monthly to Quarterly Maintenance:



References:

Professional Food Manager National Environmental Health Association, 2018.

[Food safety tips for those affected by flooding in California.](#)

[Avoid Foodborne Illness During Temporary Power Outages.](#)

[Keeping food and water safe during flooding and power outages.](#)

[A Commercial Refrigeration Maintenance Checklist to Help You Stay Cool During the Busy Season](#)

If you have questions about food safety during severe weather, or any other food safety topics, you can call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888MPHotline. These services are available in English and Spanish from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

- **Inspect and Clean Each Units Condensing and Evaporator Coils** - Did you know that only 1/100th of an inch of dirt buildup on your condenser coil reduces your units efficiency by 5 percent? Buildup on the coils means your equipment has to work harder to cool, and when it works harder, it uses more energy. The buildup of dirt and debris on the condenser coils could be increasing your electric bill by as much as 20 to 30 percent.
- **Check Compressor and Fan Motor Operation** - If your compressor fails, you will need to replace your unit. If it is working too hard, your technician can find the cause and fix it before the unit fails.
- **Clean Fan Blades** - Dirt and grease on the fan blades causes drag that slows down the motor.
- **Check Refrigerant Levels** - If your equipment is leaking refrigerant, it is an EPA violation as well as a repair issue. A repair technician will determine where the leak is coming from and will repair it before adding more refrigerant.
- **Check Electrical Connections** - Over time, the vibration that results from the unit running can cause internal wires to become loose. Eventually, a wire gets so loose that it causes a short. To prevent this problem in the future, make sure you have your system regularly inspected and tuned up, to keep those wires tightened and prevent shorts.
- **Calibrate Thermometers** - You cannot be sure your equipment complies with health regulations if the thermometers are not regularly tested and calibrated.

Importance of Refrigeration & Power Outages

Bacteria are everywhere! They are in the soil, air, water, and the foods we eat. When they have nutrients (food), moisture, and favorable temperatures, they grow rapidly, allowing for some types of bacteria to cause a foodborne illness. Refrigeration slows the bacterial growth. Bacteria grow most rapidly in the range of temperatures between 41°F- 135°F, or the "Danger Zone".

Refrigerators should be set to maintain a temperature of 40°F or below. Keep in mind the frequency the door is opened and adjust the temperature accordingly.

Summer weather and monsoons create more challenges. Steps to follow during power outages:

1. Log the temperature when the power goes out.
2. Keep the doors closed as much as possible.
3. Plan ahead and know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased.

Improper Cold Holding is the top violation in Yavapai County. Health Inspectors focus on the internal temperature of food items rather than the ambient temperature of the cold holding unit. Make sure to use thermometers to check the temperature of items in your refrigerators.

To download a printable *Refrigerated Food During Power Outages Safety Checklist*, visit: [Food Safety Charts](https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/food-safety-during-power-outage) <https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/food-safety-during-power-outage>