

# Food Safety Scoop



Brought to you by the Yavapai County Food Safety Industry Council

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## Special Points of Interest

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Food Safety Scoop 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: [extension.arizona.edu/yavapai/](http://extension.arizona.edu/yavapai/)

## Preparing for Monsoon Season



Monsoon season is approaching in Yavapai County. Heavy rains and strong winds often results in a power outage. This can be a big concern for food establishments that hold large volumes of potentially hazardous

foods (PHF) such as meats, eggs, dairy products, cooked vegetables and cut melons. These foods are especially vulnerable to bacterial growth and need to be stored below 41°F or above 135°F. This can be

a challenge without electricity. Fortunately, Food Safety Scoop is here to help you develop a plan to keep your food and customers safe and save you money if such a situation arises.

## Before a Power Outage

The time to prepare for a power outage is before one happens. Having a plan can make the difference between saving the food you have in your cooler or dealing with the loss of having to throw it all out.

Be sure to communicate your plan to your employ-

ees to ensure it will be followed in your absence. Having written instructions along with emergency numbers, including the health department can also be helpful.

Consider purchasing a generator to have available during a power outage. A generator is an

investment that can save you money on lost food in the long run. Be sure it is large enough to run all your electrical appliances and approved by your power company. Have a phone that will work without electricity as well. Use the following information to develop your plan.

## When a Power Outage Occurs



Writing down the time the outage occurs is the first step to keeping your food safe. A power outage of 2 hours or less is not considered hazardous to food that was being held under safe conditions when the outage began.

If food is being cooked when the outage occurs, be sure to throw it out if it has not yet reached its final cooking temperature. It is also important to stop cooking with gas or solid fuel if

the exhaust hood is not able to function. This could lead to a toxic fume build up in the kitchen and pose a hazard to your workers. If there is no hot water and utensils cannot be properly washed, rinsed and sanitized, stop food preparation all together.

In order to keep cold food cold, keep cooler doors closed as much as possible. Grouping packages of cold food together and surrounding

them with ice will keep them cold longer as well. As always, remember to keep raw meats separate from all other foods.

Using canned dish fuel under food on electric steam tables will help keep food temperatures over 135°F. Be sure to check their temperatures regularly and record the time if they drop below 135°F.

# After Power is Restored

Food that was 41°F or less or 135°F or above when the power went out *may* be kept on a case by case basis. Follow the steps below and then consult your local district’s inspector with your time and temperature logs to determine which foods can be kept and which will have to be discarded.

## Cold Holding



1. Once power is restored, record the time and immediately take a temperature reading.
2. Cool food to 41°F or less as quickly as possible. If you grouped food together in a cooler, space them back out

again to allow cool air to circulate. Record the time the food reaches 41°F.

3. Determine how long the food was above 41°F and contact your local inspector with this information.

## Hot Holding



1. Once power is restored, take a time and temperature reading and record and immediately reheat any food below 135°F to at least 165°F.
2. After reheating, hold the food at 135°F or more or immediately cool to 41°F or less.

3. Determine how long the food was below 135°F and contact your local inspector with this information.

When in doubt, throw it out! If you do dispose of food, be sure to keep records of the type and amount of food you throw out for insurance purposes and to inform regulators. Be sure to mark the food as spoiled or pour disinfectant on the food to ensure it will not get eaten. If you need to dispose of large amounts of food you may need to call your garbage company for disposal instructions..

Be sure ALL employees are aware of these procedures.

# Humidity



Most of the year, humidity is not a concern in Yavapai County. However, monsoon season can increase humidity significantly. A humid environment in a dry storage area can cause an increase in

the growth of molds and bacteria and can also deteriorate packaging materials. During times of high humidity, a dehumidifier may be helpful to avoid this problem. As always, if you notice the growth of mold on any food, throw the entire

item away. Once mold is visible, it has grown throughout the entire food item, cutting the visible mold off would not get rid of the mold. Molds can from a toxin called aflatoxin, which can be fatal if consumed.

# Quiz

1. Which of the following are considered Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHF)?
  - A. Raw meats
  - B. Cooked vegetables
  - C. Cut Melons
  - D. Dairy Products
  - E. All of the Above
2. What is the first thing you should do during a power outage?
  - A. Check the temperatures of all PHF foods
  - B. Record the time the outage started
  - C. Call the health department
  - D. Stop cooking food
3. True or False? You only need to contact your inspectors about your food if it falls below 135°F or gets above 41°F during the power outage.
4. True or False? The food in your steam table reads 132°F. As long as you heat it back up to 135°F right away it is safe to serve to your customers.
5. True or False? You are cooking burgers when the power goes out and the grill stops working. The internal temperature of the burgers reads 150°F. As long as you serve them right away, they will be safe.
6. If you determine food is unsafe after a power outage, what should you do to it?
  - A. Donate it to a soup kitchen
  - B. Let your employees eat it
  - C. Throw it straight in the dumpster
  - D. Mark it as unsafe or pour disinfectant on it before disposing of it.

Answers: 1.E 2.B 3.T 4.F 5.F 6.D

Resources: 1. Washington Department of Health  
2. Cincinnati Department of Health