IOWA DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS & APPEALS

Food Safety for Food Establishments During a Power Outage

1. **Do two things immediately:**
   a. Write down the time the power went off.
   b. Check food temperatures with a thermometer and write them down.

2. **Keep temperature records while the power is out.**
   a. Check cold food every 2 hours for each unit.
   b. Write down the times and temperatures.

3. **For food being held cold (such as in a refrigerator at 41° F or below):**
   a. Write down the time when food rises above 41° F.
   b. Discard all cold food that has been above 41° F for more than 4 hours.

4. **For frozen foods that thaw out:**
   a. If thawed food does not exceed 41° F for more than four hours, it may be refrozen. (However, re-freezing may make some foods watery or mushy.)

5. **To keep cold food cold longer:**
   b. Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature (except while checking temperatures every two hours).
   c. Cover open units with a tarp.
   d. Don't add hot food to units.
   e. Group chilled foods together to reduce warming.
   f. A closed refrigerator can keep food cold for up to four hours; a closed freezer for up to two days. A half-filled freezer will warm up twice as fast as a full one.

6. **Recovery when the power returns:**
   a. Review temperature records.
   b. Discard food as required (see #7 below).
   c. Reset all breakers, equipment, etc.

7. **Discard or salvage:**
   a. Refrigerated or frozen food should be discarded if:
      - Above 41° F for four hours or more.
      - Frozen and then thawed for four or more hours.
      - Deteriorated in quality or has an unusual appearance, color, or odor.

b. Potentially Hazardous Food (PHF) must be discarded if it has been in the "Temperature Danger Zone" (41° F-135° F) for more than 4 hours. PHFs include:
    - Animal food that is raw or heat-treated:
        - Ground beef, cooked roast beef, veal, lamb, poultry, fish, seafood, luncheon meats, hot dogs, hams, etc.
    - Plant foods that are heat-treated or consist of raw seed sprouts
        - Cooked pasta, rice, peas, corn, beans, etc.
    - Cut melons
        - Watermelon, musk or honeydew melons
    - Cut leafy greans
        - Cut, shredded, sliced, chopped or torn iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, leaf lettuce, escarole, endive, spring mix, spinach, cabbage, kale, arugula, chard, etc.
    - Cut tomatoes or mixtures of cut tomatoes
    - Garlic-in-oil mixtures
    - Eggs and dairy products
        - Eggs or egg products, ice cream, yogurt
        - Milk, cream, buttermilk, cream-based foods or soups
        - Soft cheeses such as cream, ricotta, brie, etc.
    - Desserts
        - Pies, cakes, and pastries containing custard cheese, chiffon, meringue or pumpkin
    - Soups, stews, casseroles or similar dishes containing meats, pasta, rice, eggs, or cheeses
c. Partially cooked food should be discarded if without power for more than one hour.
d. Frozen foods, if stored in a sealed walk-in or cabinet and where ambient temperature has remained below 41° F, may be salvaged.

7. Remember:

1. Cancel incoming food supply shipments.
2. Never taste food to determine its safety.
3. When in doubt, throw it out.

References:

Emergency Handbook for Food Managers, Twin Cities Metro Advanced Practice Centers (APC), supported by funding from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), First printing, September 2005

A Consumer's Guide to Food Safety: Severe Storms and Hurricanes,
www.fsis.usda.gov/fact_sheets/Severe_Storms_and Hurricanes Guide/index.asp