

Montezuma County Public Health Department

106 West North Street
Cortez, CO 81321

(970)565-3056
Fax: (970)565-0647



**PROCEDURES FOR FOOD FACILITIES IN THE EVENT OF
A MAJOR DISASTER OR EMERGENCY**

During a major disaster, water, sewer, and natural gas lines can rupture and break. Also, electrical and power supply lines are often broken and services interrupted. Given these potential problems, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. **WATER SERVICE PROBLEMS:** If water service is interrupted or contaminated, water from these lines cannot be used for drinking or cooking. This includes water lines to buildings that supply drinking fountains, coffee machines, soft drink/soda machines, and ice machines. If these lines are used, there is a great risk of illness or death due to the contamination of the water source.

SOLUTION: Use bottled water. If there is no water available in the food establishment, the business needs to immediately close and must contact our department at the above address, for approval prior to re-opening.

2. **ELECTRICAL PROBLEMS:** If the electrical supply is interrupted or completely out, food stored in refrigerators or freezers may spoil, depending on the duration of the power outage. If the power is out, **DO NOT OPEN** the units if possible. An unopened refrigerator should be able to maintain a temperature of 41 degrees or below for up to 4 hours. A refrigerator whose door has been opened must maintain this temperature for 2 hours or less. Readily perishable foods can generally be kept at room temperature for up to an hour without spoilage or potential health problems. (We are not approving readily perishable foods to be stored at room temperature. Under the Colorado Food Regulations, they must be maintained at 41 degrees or below, or 135 degrees or above at all times. This applies only to disaster situations.) Frozen foods once thawed cannot be refrozen.

SOLUTION: Try to keep readily perishable foods at 41 degrees or below. Use clean uncontaminated ice to help keep these foods at the proper temperature. Any spoiled foods should be put in to sealed plastic garbage bags and disposed of properly in the dumpster. Make sure the dumpster lids are closed tightly to prevent fly breeding and access by rodents.

3. **SEWAGE PROBLEMS:** If the sewer line has been ruptured or broken, any water or sewage from the food establishment may either start backing up inside the facility or start overflowing out of the facility, or both.

SOLUTION: Immediately discontinue the use of the toilet facilities, and any discharges of wastewater. The food facility must immediately close. Try to contain sewage discharges outside the building to prevent risk to the public, and use chlorine or bleach to help disinfect the area. Any food, including cans or bottles, contaminated by the sewage must be properly disposed of in the dumpsters and **CANNOT** be washed and reused. All floors and contaminated equipment must be properly cleaned and disinfected.

4. **GAS LINE PROBLEMS:** If gas lines ruptured and service is interrupted, some equipment in the food facility will not be functional including stoves, steam tables, and gas hot water heaters.

SOLUTION: Food facilities will have a problem operating without natural gas service. Any multi-use utensils, such as plates and silverware could not be properly washed and sanitized. Single service utensils will have to be used, such as paper or plastic plates, cups, knives, forks, and spoons. Employees will also not be able to properly wash their hands. Unless the facility is a totally pre-packaged food establishment, our department recommends that the facility close until service is restored.

5. **FIRES:** Fires are sometimes caused by grease or other disasters.

SOLUTION: If your food facility is involved in a fire, it must be closed immediately and inspected by our department prior to re-opening.

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**WATER OUTAGE
SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR FOOD FACILITIES**

Food facilities experiencing a water outage **MUST** notify the Montezuma County Health Department.

*Call (970) 564-4763

*Email mmathews@co.montezuma.co.us

*Please state business name and time and date of outage.

*The best precaution to take during a water outage is to cease food and beverage operations immediately.

Here are some precautions you are advised to take:

- ✓ Establishments may remain open if they can provide:
 - Drinkable (potable) emergency water
 - Warm water to wash hands and cooking utensils
 - Single service sets (utensils, dishes, glasses) must be used to serve public
 - Commercially bottled water must be provided for food preparation
 - Temporary hand washing equipment – a container of clean, warm water with a spigot that allows hands-free washing, soap and towels in every food preparation area.
- ✓ No preparation of potentially hazardous foods may be done in the facility. Prepared foods from another approved supplier may be allowed.
- ✓ Bars are approved to serve bottled beverages only, unless they meet the above requirements.
- ✓ Establishments selling 100% prepackaged food may remain open
- ✓ Establishments selling unpackaged foods that cannot provide water must remain closed.
- ✓ Operable toilet facilities with hand washing facilities must be available within a reasonable walking distance from the food facility.