

Returning to Normal Operation After a Power Outage in Child Care Centres

This fact sheet is a guideline only. Watch for media reports and situation specific information from the local utility and the Health Unit.

When Power is Restored:

- Assess the safety of potentially hazardous foods attached
- Watch for media reports from the municipalities that outline the preferred methods for food disposal
- Small volumes of food may be discarded at the curbside for municipal pick-up.
- Large volumes of food may need a disposal company for transportation to the landfill.
- Ensure that all equipment is functioning properly.
- Refrigeration – less than 4°C/40°F
- Hot holding units
- Dishwashers
- Ventilation systems
- Lighting
- Hot water heater
- Clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces prior to resuming normal activities.
- Drain and refill hot water tanks where the temperature of the water delivered to the faucet has dropped below 45°C/120°F.
- Private Water Supply (if applicable) – Facilities designated under Ontario Regulation 170/03 – Drinking Water Systems.
- If you think that your water system has been affected by a loss of pressure during the power outage (odour, colour change, sputtering), contact the Ministry of the Environment Spills Action Centre at 1(800) 268-6060 before using the water for drinking or food preparation.
- If the power outage has not affected your water system, increase the chlorine residual (if applicable) to 0.2 ppm and flush the system until the increased residual is detected at the farthest point in the distribution system and obtains a water sample for bacteriological analysis. You may continue to use the water for drinking and food preparation

Food Safety

The perishable food in your fridge and freezer must be kept cold while the power is off. The good news is fridges and freezers are designed to keep the cold air in. You should avoid opening them wherever possible. A fully stocked, upright or chest freezer will keep food frozen for about two days. If the freezer is only half full, the food should stay frozen for one day. Your fridge will keep food cold for four to six hours without power.

- Any food that was stored at or above 4°C for two hours or more should be thrown out.
- Remember that unsafe food may not smell or look bad.
- If frozen food has thawed and risen above 4°C it should be discarded.
- Adding bags of ice to your fridge or freezer will help maintain the cold temperature.
- Squeeze the frozen food. If you hear the crunch of ice crystals then it is only partially thawed and can be refrozen.
- The best way to ensure your food is safely stored is to put an accurate indicating thermometer in your fridge and freezer.
- Storing food outdoors in cold weather is not a good idea. The sunlight can warm it up and the food could be contaminated by animals.
- If any food comes in contact with raw meat juices it should be thrown out. You can help prevent this by storing raw meats separate and below other foods.
- “When in doubt; throw it out”.

You may need to change the way you prepare baby formula during a power outage.

- Water used for preparing formula must be sterilized for all infants.
- If you can't boil water for mixing formula, use ready to feed formula.
- If you are saving mixed formula, keep in the fridge. If the power has been off for four hours or more; throw it out.
- Use prepared bottles of formula within 24 hours.
- Once you've started feeding a bottle of formula, the bottle should be used within two hours. Throw out any left overs.

Don't forget to use proper hand washing whenever you are handling food. Alcohol based hand sanitizers are effective when there is no food on your hands.

Reference: Adapted with permission from the Middlesex London Health Unit



For more information, please call the Health ACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853 or visit our website at www.healthunit.org