

Guidance for Re-Opening Food & Lodging Establishments After Flooding

This information is for licensed food or lodging establishments. Take the following actions to re-open after damage to your facility and food stocks due to flooding and power outages.

Closing Your Facility

You must close your facility for business if you have one or more of the following hazards:

- Any part of the food establishment was flooded – all flood waters are considered contaminated
- Sewage backed up into the facility
- Plumbing does not drain, and toilets are not usable by staff
- Drinking water supply for the food establishment was flooded, and drinkable water is not available from alternate sources or by following Boil Water Advisory guidelines
- Customers or staff must walk through sewage-contaminated water to get into the facility
- There is no power
- Other hazards that may compromise food safety in the facility

Reinspection Before Re-opening

Conduct a complete self-inspection to make sure that normal operations can be resumed safely and without compromising food safety. Only enter the building with caution, and with the guidance of structural and electrical experts. If your establishment was closed by the Department of Health Food & Lodging Program, you must have a re-opening inspection by the Health Department before re-opening.

Sanitize

Decontaminate and sanitize equipment and structural surfaces that are usable. Thoroughly wash and rinse surfaces before sanitizing. Follow decontamination and sanitization procedures using chemical sanitization, e.g., chlorine bleach at a concentration of 100-200 ppm (1 tablespoon bleach in 1 gallon of drinkable water), Quaternary Ammonium at a concentration of 200 ppm, or other approved sanitizers. Proper decontamination will eliminate harmful microorganisms, chemical residues, or filth that could pose a food safety risk.

Discard Damaged Food Products

Discard all food and packaging that has been in contact with flood waters, unless the food is in a hermetically sealed can that has not been damaged.

- Destroy refrigerated and frozen foods – such as meat, poultry, shell eggs, egg products, and milk – that have been immersed in floodwaters. If in doubt, throw it out.
- Inspect canned foods and discard any food in damaged cans. Can damage is shown by swelling, leaking, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting or crushing/denting severe enough to prevent normal stacking or opening with a manual wheel-type can opener.
- Discard products in containers with screw caps, snap-lids, crimped-caps (soda bottles), twist-caps, flip-top, snap-open and similar type closures that have been submerged in floodwaters.
- Do not salvage food packed in plastic, paper, cardboard, cloth and similar containers that have been water damaged.
- Undamaged, commercially prepared foods in all-metal cans or retort pouches can be saved if you remove labels that can come off. Thoroughly wash the cans, rinse them, and then disinfect them with a sanitizing solution consisting of 1 tablespoon of bleach per gallon of drinkable water. Finally, re-label containers that had the labels removed, including the expiration date, with a marker.
- Complete proper and safe disposal of condemned food items in a manner consistent with federal, state and local solid waste storage, transportation, and disposal regulations. This must be done to ensure these products do not reappear as damaged or salvaged merchandise for human consumption.

Physical Facilities

- If you have a well that has been flooded, the water should be disinfected and tested to confirm it is safe after floodwaters recede. If you suspect that your well may be contaminated, information is available on the Health Department website for disinfection procedures: healthvermont.gov/health-environment/drinking-water/disinfection (in English)
- If you have a public water supply, confirm that drinkable water is available from the water operator. Follow Boil Water Advisory information if drinkable water is not confirmed.
- Thoroughly wash all physical facility interior surfaces (e.g., floors, walls and ceilings), using drinkable water, with a hot detergent solution, rinsed free of detergents and residues, and treated with a sanitizing solution. (See section above on sanitizing.)
- Prevent or clean up mold. Structural components of the building (e.g., walls, piping, ceiling and HVAC system/ventilation systems) affected by flood waters or other damage, should be cleaned, repaired, and disinfected where possible. Remove and destroy wall board that has been water damaged. Cement walls that have mold damage can be reconditioned.

- Thoroughly clean and free debris from any exhaust systems. Consult professional service technicians as needed. Water damaged ventilation systems that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized should be removed and replaced. In all cases, replace all ventilation air filters.

Equipment

- Thoroughly wash metal pans, ceramic dishes and utensils (including can openers) with soap and hot water. Rinse and then sanitize by boiling in drinkable water or immersing for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of drinking water or other approved sanitizer. Follow instructions on the sanitizer label for the correct concentration.
- Thoroughly wash countertops, equipment and non-food contact surfaces with soap and hot water. Rinse and then sanitize by applying a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of drinking water or other approved sanitizer. Air dry.
- Use a dishwasher or three-compartment sink to wash, rinse and sanitize equipment and utensils *using drinkable water* and:
 - Use chlorine bleach at a concentration of 50-100 ppm (1/2 tablespoon of bleach in 1 gallon of drinkable water) or other approved sanitizers for food contact surfaces and equipment.
 - Mechanical dishwashing machines should provide a final sanitizing rinse of either 50 ppm chlorine (for chemical sanitizing machines) or 180° F final sanitizing rinse (for hot water sanitizing machines).
 - An approved test kit should be available to ensure appropriate sanitizer strength for chemical sanitizing and a maximum registering thermometer or temperature-sensitive tape should be available to check that the hot water reaches 180° F or the utensil surface reaches a temperature of 170° F.
 - Run the empty dishwasher through the wash-rinse-sanitize cycle three times. This is done to flush the water lines and assure that the dishwasher is cleaned and sanitized internally before washing equipment and utensils in it.
- Refrigerated display and storage cases and other refrigerator equipment used to store food should be cleared of all contaminated products and their juices prior to cleaning.
- Refrigerated storage equipment should be thoroughly washed inside and outside with a hot detergent solution and rinsed free of detergents and residues. Give special attention to lighting, drainage areas, ventilation vents, corners, cracks and crevices, door handles and door gaskets. Treat all clean surfaces with a sanitizing solution. (See the section above on sanitizing.)

- If the insulation, door gaskets, hoses, etc. are damaged by flood or liquefied food items, replace or discard these refrigerated display cases and storage cases and other refrigerator equipment.
- Remove and replace all filters on equipment if they are not designed to be cleaned in place.
- Replace all ice machine filters and beverage dispenser filters, and flush all water lines, including steam water lines and ice machine water lines, for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Discard all ice in ice machines. Clean and sanitize the interior surfaces (ice-making compartment and storage bin). Run the ice machine process through three cycles and discard ice with each cycle.
- Clean and sanitize all sinks thoroughly before resuming use.
- Inspect equipment to be sure it is operational and that all aspects of its integrity are maintained.
- Stove units should be thoroughly cleaned and checked by the fire department, local utility company, or authorized service representative prior to use.

Maintaining Food Temperatures

- Verify that all open-top refrigerated and freezer display cases, walk-in refrigerators, and walk-in freezers are capable of consistently maintaining cold holding temperatures ($\leq 41^{\circ}\text{F}$ or in a frozen state) before food items are placed in the units.
- Ensure that heating equipment can heat to the appropriate cooking temperature ($\geq 135^{\circ}\text{F}$) for raw animal foods. Make sure that cooling equipment can maintain foods at the appropriate ($\leq 41^{\circ}\text{F}$) temperature.
- Verify that all equipment used for food preparation (e.g., cooking, cooling, and reheating) is functioning and properly calibrated prior to use.

Food Source and Receipt

- All foods, including raw, fresh, frozen, pre-packaged, shelf-stable, and ready-to-eat foods should only be received from an approved food source.
- The edible portion of fresh produce that has come in contact with floodwaters is considered adulterated and should not be used.
- Food should be received by a person who is responsible for ensuring that food packages meet temperature requirements and are intact with no breaks, seams, or other openings. Canned foods should not be swollen or have any dents or punctures in the cans or soiled labels.
- Foods requiring temperature control should be received in a frozen state or at temperatures less than 41°F for refrigerated storage.

Pest Control

- Ensure that any rodents/pests that may have entered the facility are gone. Remove dead pests and sanitize any food-contact surfaces that have come in contact with pests.
- Seal all openings into the facility to prevent future entry of pests or rodents.
- Dispose of contaminated or spoiled solid foods in closed containers for removal to prevent rodents and flies.

Employees

- Always use soap and drinkable running warm water (at least 100° F) to wash hands.
- Hand sanitizers may only be used after handwashing. Hand sanitizers are ineffective against germs on soiled hands and are not a substitute for soap and water handwashing.
- Employees should not touch ready-to-eat foods with their bare hands, but instead should use tongs, deli paper, or single-use disposable gloves.
- Employees with open wounds should not work with hands-on preparation of foods or with cleaned and sanitized food contact surfaces or single-service/single-use utensils. If infected wounds are covered with a double, water-proof barrier such as a finger cot or water-tight bandage and plastic gloves, the employee may continue to work with food.
- Employees sick with vomiting, diarrhea or jaundice should not be at work, and should not return to work until at least 48 hours after symptoms cease.