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## Bite-Sized Food Safety

Food safety resources  
for front-line managers  
to train food workers

# Imminent Health Hazards

**ASK:** What is an "imminent health hazard"?

**ANSWER:** An imminent health hazard means a significant threat or danger to health that is considered to exist when a product, practice, circumstance, or event creates a situation that **requires immediate correction or cessation of operation to prevent injury** based on:

- (1) The number of potential injuries, and
- (2) The nature, severity, and duration of the anticipated injury.



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**ASK:** What are some examples of imminent health hazards?

**ANSWER:** Examples of imminent health hazards include:

- ◆ Extended power outage
- ◆ Sewage backup
- ◆ No refrigeration units below 41°F
- ◆ Extended interruption of water service
- ◆ Fire in building
- ◆ Discharge of fire suppression system
- ◆ Gas leak
- ◆ Flooding of building
- ◆ Misuse or spill of poisonous or toxic substances
- ◆ Outbreak of foodborne illness
- ◆ Grossly unsanitary conditions
- ◆ Other circumstances endangering public health



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**If there is an imminent health hazard: 1) Immediately stop preparing, serving, & selling food, and 2) Call the Health Department at (304) 728-8416 or after hours call (304) 820-3658.**

**ASK:** What can you do during a power outage to keep refrigerated foods cold?

**ANSWER:**

- ◆ Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed. The refrigerator will keep food safe for up to 4 hours.
- ◆ If the power is off longer, transfer food to a cooler and fill with ice or frozen gel packs. Make sure there is enough ice to keep food in the cooler at 41°F or below. Add more ice to the cooler as it begins to melt.
- ◆ A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full). Frozen foods that have thawed, but still contain ice crystals are safe to eat.
- ◆ Obtain dry ice or block ice if your power is going to be out for a prolonged period. Fifty pounds of dry ice should hold an 18-cubic-foot freezer for 2 days. (Caution: Do not touch dry ice with bare hands or place it in direct contact with food.)
- ◆ During cold weather, do not place perishable food outside. Instead fill buckets, empty milk jugs, or cans with water and leave them outside to freeze. Use the homemade ice in your refrigerator, freezer, or coolers.

**ASK:** If your refrigerator has been without power and the food in it has been above 41°F for more than four hours, which of these foods can be saved and which should be thrown out?

**ANSWERS:**

Raw ground beef	<u>Throw Out</u>
Cooked chicken	<u>Throw Out</u>
Pickles	<u>Save</u>
Soup	<u>Throw Out</u>
Dried Coconut	<u>Save</u>
Milk	<u>Throw Out</u>
Aged cheddar cheese	<u>Save</u>
Cooked green beans	<u>Throw Out</u>
Deli meats	<u>Throw Out</u>
Ketchup	<u>Save</u>

**WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT !**

Eggs	<u>Throw Out</u>
Tuna salad	<u>Throw Out</u>
Head of lettuce	<u>Save</u>
Sliced tomatoes	<u>Throw Out</u>
Bean sprouts	<u>Throw Out</u>
Sliced cantaloupe	<u>Throw Out</u>
Lemon wedges	<u>Save</u>
Custard cream pie	<u>Throw Out</u>
Apple pie	<u>Save</u>
Brie cheese	<u>Throw Out</u>



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**ASK:** What should be done with foods exposed to a fire?

**ANSWER:**

Food can be damaged by the heat of a fire, smoke fumes, and fire-fighting chemicals. Discard all food that has been near a fire including all foods in cans, bottles, and jars. While they may appear to be okay, the heat from a fire can damage the containers and can activate food spoilage bacteria. Fumes and chemicals cannot be washed off. Refrigerator seals are not airtight and fumes can get inside. Discard foods from refrigerators and freezers. Wash, rinse, and sanitize all cookwear exposed.

# Imminent Health Hazards

A food establishment shall immediately discontinue operations and notify the Health Department if there is an imminent health hazard. Imminent health hazards include:



- ◆ Extended power outages
- ◆ Sewage backups
- ◆ No refrigeration units below 41°F
- ◆ Extended interruption of water service
- ◆ Fire in building
- ◆ Discharge of fire suppression system
- ◆ Gas leak
- ◆ Flooding in building
- ◆ Misuse or spill of poisonous or toxic substances
- ◆ Outbreak of foodborne illness
- ◆ Grossly unsanitary conditions
- ◆ Other circumstances endangering public health

If operations are discontinued, the food establishment shall obtain approval from the Health Department before resuming operations.

**NOTE:** A food establishment need not discontinue operations in an area of the establishment that is unaffected by the imminent health hazard. For example, a food establishment consists of a bar on the lower level and a kitchen and dining area on the upper level. If the lower level had a sewage backup, only the bar would need to close.

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