

PUBLIC PROTECTION - INFORMATION

Hygiene and safety advice for food businesses in the event of a flood

Food Safety

If your food business has been flooded there could be a serious risk to public health from infection and food contamination:

Do not prepare any food or re-open until the premises have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. The floodwater may be heavily contaminated with sewage, harmful bacteria and other pollutants such as oil and petrol.

All food contact surfaces, equipment, utensils, work tables etc must be thoroughly sanitised before re-using. Any heavily contaminated items should be thrown away.

All food that may have been contaminated must be destroyed. It must be double-bagged and placed in a sealed container so it doesn't attract pests.

Contact your commercial waste contractor to arrange collection of this food in the normal way.

Wear protective clothing, including rubber gloves, wellingtons, overalls etc. Wash your hands thoroughly after handling anything that may be contaminated and using hot soapy water or liquid anti-bacterial soap.

Do not use any electrical items or circuits as these may be unsafe. The circuits and equipment must be checked by a competent person (i.e. a qualified electrician) before use.

If you become ill or suffer any gastric symptoms following the clean up, visit your GP as soon as possible. Nobody should handle or prepare food if they are suffering from gastric illness (symptoms include diarrhoea and vomiting).

Power cuts

High-risk food (such as meat, fish, dairy, egg and rice products) must be kept at or below 8°C to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria.

If your refrigerators have been without power for more than four hours it is important to immediately chill the food to below 8°C or discard the food if you cannot do so (only one single period of up to four hours out of refrigeration).

Provided doors are kept closed, food should remain frozen in disconnected freezers for up to 24 hours. If food has defrosted it should be safe if treated as chilled food, refrigerated and used up to within a couple of days. If frozen food has risen above 8°C for more than four hours the food should be thrown away.

If you are affected by intermittent power cuts, consider using cool boxes and keep a ready supply of ice blocks. Freeze these at times when the power is on.

Try to avoid opening refrigerator and freezer doors when the power is off. The temperature of an open fridge rises very quickly.

If you are unable to keep high-risk food under adequate temperature control you must close your business.

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General health and safety

When cleaning up try to avoid contact with floodwater. Wear protective clothing including rubber gloves, wellingtons, overalls etc.

Avoid ingesting any water. Wash hands thoroughly and regularly with hot water and liquid anti-bacterial soap.

Do not use any electrical equipment or circuits that have been flooded until checked and declared safe by a qualified electrician.

If the power supply is off, assess the risk to your staff and customers and consider closing the business.

Do not use internal lifts until power supplies are back to normal. You may become stranded if the supply is interrupted.

Use specialist detergents when cleaning up petrol/oil and follow safety information from the manufacturer. Ensure adequate ventilation.

Do not enter any confined spaces (such as cellars) where there is known oil/petrol contamination.

Visit the Health Protection Agency (HPA) website to find out more about what to do after a flood. The HPA also has some useful questions and answers about flood safety.

http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1213686561005

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