

Guideline for Loss of Water Service in Food Facilities

What food facilities are affected?

All food facilities/establishments including restaurants, supermarkets, caterers, food service operations in schools, nursing homes and hospitals, charitable food facilities, kitchens in non-profit institutions, food manufacturers and distributors and anyone else involved in the commercial preparation and distribution of food, water, ice and beverages could be affected if they lose their supply of water for any reason such as a water main break, pump failure, service shut-off, reduction of pressure due to an outside emergency or similar event.

What should restaurant, supermarket and food service managers do?

Contact your food regulatory agency immediately. During the course of an extended interruption of water service in a municipal water supply or a private well water supply, it is the responsibility of the food facility to contact the Regulatory Authority. The food facility shall discontinue operations until such time the Regulatory Authority reviews the severity of the water interruption. Options may include continued cessation of the food facility operations based on the facility's capability to safely provide food service or installation of temporary means of providing water which allows safe operation of the food facility.

A food facility manager (or the "Person-in-Charge") is responsible for conducting both the initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

What can food facilities do to address a loss of water supply?

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be taken, if approved by the Regulatory Authority, to address specific affected food operations during loss of water supply.

Temporary Water Supply

1. The food facility must be provided with water from an approved source, examples are bottled water or water provided from a bulk water tanker provided by the municipal water supplier. Water must be transported and stored in the food facility in clean, covered containers. The containers used in the food facility shall have dispensing spouts. The water container shall not leak or drip.
2. An adequate supply of water shall be available during all times of operation to include the peak hours of operation to safely continue operation of the food facility. Water shall be used for cooking, cleaning, and handwashing. Single service utensils, plates and cups shall be available and used if during the water service interruption adequate dishwashing facilities are

unavailable. Use of single utensils, plates and cups will also lessen the quantity of water necessary to continue operation.

3. Water used during the water service interruption shall be able to be heated to 110°F for ware washing of equipment and 100°F for hand washing. If no means of heating water is available, the facility shall discontinue food service and may only provide prepackaged foods. If only prepackaged foods are to be sold, chemically treated towelettes/wipes shall be available in place of handwashing. Chemically treated towelettes/wipes may not be used in lieu of handwashing with water and soap if there will be exposed food preparation and service in the food facility.
4. Water containers holding water (100°F) for hand washing shall have spigots to dispense the water along with a supply of soap and single service towels. A waste water collection container (or drain) is necessary. A sign shall be provided to remind employees to use these temporary hand washing containers during the water service interruption.
5. Water shall be available for use in maintaining the employee toilet facilities to include flushing of employee toilets. If employee toilet facilities cannot be operated with an adequate water supply, the facility may not operate.

Recovery Phase

What should be done when food facilities have been informed that the water supply is restored?

Recovery involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a normal safe operation. Following the restoration of the water supply, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and/or your local water department will provide specific instructions should they be necessary, such as flushing of the system or a boil water advisory. **If a boil water advisory is issued after the water supply is restored, contact your food regulatory authority immediately for instruction on safely complying with a boil water advisory.**

It is always safest to flush all facility water supply lines after a water supply is restored to service just in case any contaminants may have entered into the water supply.

- Flush all pipes / faucets
- Follow the directions of your water utility (in the newspaper, radio, or television) or, as general guidance, run cold water faucets for at least 5 minutes.
- Equipment with waterline connections such as post-mix beverage machines, spray misters, coffee or tea urns, ice machines, glass washers, dishwashers, and other equipment with water connections must be flushed, cleaned, and sanitized in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Remove and replace any water filter (pads or cartridges or similar) that may be connected to any water lines. For example: Ice machine filter, water fountains, beverage units and similar.

- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle.
- Drain reservoirs in tall buildings.
- Flush drinking fountains: run continuously for 5 minutes.
- Ice Machine Sanitation:
 - ✓ Flush the water line to the machine inlet
 - ✓ Close the valve on the water line behind the machine and disconnect the water line from the machine inlet.
 - ✓ Open the valve, run 5 gallons of water through the valve and dispose of the water.
 - ✓ Close the valve.
 - ✓ Reconnect the water line to the machine inlet.
 - ✓ Open the valve.
 - ✓ Flush the water lines in the machine.
 - ✓ Turn on the machine.
 - ✓ Make ice for 1 hour and dispose of the first batch of ice.
 - ✓ Clean and sanitize all parts and surfaces that come in contact with water and ice, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Water heaters may need to be disinfected and flushed to remove any contaminated water. Some types of water treatment devices may need to be disinfected and flushed to remove any contaminated water. Some types of water treatment devices may need to be disinfected or replaced before being used. Check with the manufacturer for details.

If you have questions or concerns regarding water supply interruption in food facilities, please contact the Department of Agriculture or your Local Health Department. www.eatsafepa.com