

Flood

For single events affecting an individual establishment, the permit holder must report to the regulatory authority. Assess the situation. Immediately discontinue operation if a safe operation cannot be maintained using an alternative procedure. Follow the appropriate emergency procedures if approved by the regulatory authority or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the regulatory authority.

In the event of an emergency involving a flood, appropriate food establishment responses must be taken after an assessment of multiple factors including but not limited to:

- The complexity and scope of food operations,
- The duration of the emergency event,
- The impact on other critical infrastructure and services (example: water supply, food, equipment, linens, single-service, wastewater disposal, site drainage, building access, indoor air quality), and
- The availability of alternative procedures that can be used to meet Food Code and Food Law requirements.

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

Responding to a Flood

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific affected food operations after a flood.

Minor Leakage

Minor leakage from a water line or incidental water accumulation on a floor. Food, utensils, equipment, clean linens, single-service/use items not affected

Alternative Procedure

- Unaffected areas of the establishment may remain open while repairs/recovery take place. Minimize traffic from flooded areas to unaffected food areas.

Flooding Inside the Building

Flooding inside the building due to the overflow of a body of water, poor surface drainage, a major break in a water line, etc. that affects food, utensils, equipment, clean linens, or single-service/use items.

Alternative Procedure

- Discontinue operation. Resume operations only after recovery steps have been completed.

After a Flood

Recovery involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a normal operation.

A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory authority.

The Permit Holder will:

- Sort the salvageable from the non-salvageable foods, equipment, utensils, linens, and single-service items as quickly as possible.
- Properly dispose of the non-salvageable items.
- Contact the local building department and other appropriate agencies to determine if the building structure is safe and approved for occupancy.
- Provide general clean-up while ensuring worker health and safety. Clean and sanitize equipment and utensils.

For information on air quality after a flood, see the U.S. EPA publication "Fact Sheet: Flood Cleanup - Avoiding Indoor Air Quality Problems" at: www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/flood.html

Personal Health and Safety Considerations for Employees Involved in Clean-up

- Wear eye protection
- Wear rubber boots that can be washed and sanitized after the event
- Wear protective clothing such as coveralls
- Do not allow employees to walk between the affected area and other areas of the establishment without removing footwear and protective clothing
- Follow OSHA rules for handling detergents, sanitizers, and other chemicals used in the cleaning process
- Handwashing – Immediately after working with contaminated materials and before engaging in food preparation activities (working with exposed food, clean equipment and utensils, unwrapped single-service/use articles)
 - Double hand washing: Clean hands and exposed portions of the arms using a cleaning compound in a lavatory that is properly equipped by vigorously rubbing together the surfaces of their lathered hands and arms for at least 20 seconds and thoroughly rinsing with clean water. Repeat
 - Dry hands using disposable towels
 - Use a disposable towel to turn off the water to prevent re-contaminating the hands
 - Follow-up with a food code compliant hand sanitizer
 - Have janitorial staff clean the lavatory faucets and other portions of the lavatory after use to prevent transferring any contamination to food handlers

Clean-up

- All damaged food equipment, utensils, linens, and single-service items must be destroyed and properly disposed
- Floors, walls, furnishings, carpets, utensils, and equipment damaged beyond salvage must be removed and replaced as necessary.
- Affected walls, floors, and equipment surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water, rinsed, and sanitized. Carpets should be either removed or effectively cleaned.
- Remove wet materials. Dispose of any materials that cannot be effectively cleaned and sanitized.
- Remove any standing water
- Clean and sanitize any utensils and equipment in the affected area
- Use a detergent solution to clean floors, equipment, and other affected areas followed by a clean water rinse
- Sanitize the floor and any other affected areas by using an approved chlorine sanitizer/disinfectant to equal 500 part per million chlorine solution or equivalent.
- Air-dry the affected area
- Launder or discard mop heads and other cleaning aids that contacted flood water
- Alternative measure: Hire a janitorial service having expertise in cleaning food establishments exposed to floods
- Contaminated Food, Linens, Single-Service/Use Items
 - Discard any food items (packaged or unpackaged) in contact with flood water
 - Launder any linens or uniforms in contact with flood water
 - Launder separately from other linens
 - Use bleach
 - Use a mechanical dryer
 - Discard any single-service/use items in contact with flood water

General Flood Salvage Assessment

Flood waters may carry silt, raw sewage, oil or chemical waste that can make storm-damaged foods unsafe to eat if packaging is contaminated. Discard any food or food packaging materials that have come into contact with flood water. Very few food or beverage items can be saved after being exposed to flood water. Food items in soft packaging or with screw-top lids must be destroyed. In some cases canned goods in metal cans or rigid plastic containers can be saved. Even so, the condition of the can is another limiting factor. The presence of rust, soil, or destroyed labeling precludes salvage.

Flood water can make foods unsafe to eat especially if packaging is contaminated. **Discard** the following foods if water has covered, splashed, dripped on or seeped into the package:

- Alcoholic beverages: Refer to your local regulatory authority for salvage or destruction.
- Exposed foods, bulk foods, fresh produce, meat, poultry, fish and eggs;
- Any foods packaged in paper, plastic, cloth, or fiber;
- Cardboard boxes, even if the contents seem dry, including cereals, pasta products, rice, salt;
- Foods with cardboard seals, such as mayonnaise and salad dressing, or foil or cellophane packages;
- Food in glass jars, including unopened jars with waxed paper, foil, cellophane or cloth covers;
- Foods, liquids or beverages in crown-capped bottles or containers with pull-tab tops, corks or screw caps;
- All opened containers and packages; foods in bags or canisters;
- Cans that are dented, leaking, bulging or rusted; and
- Cans that have been tossed about and are far from their normal storage spot (possibility of pinholes or seam fractures).
- Cans may not be sold without all required labeling information. Therefore, cans with damaged labels should be discarded.

Salvaged Goods – Reconditioning

If the quantities of food involved are large (e.g. a large supermarket or a food warehouse), it may be feasible to attempt salvage for either human or animal consumption. The items must either be destroyed or moved to approved firms that have reconditioning capability. Such activity must be coordinated with the Massachusetts Food Protection Program and the local health department.

Disposal of food

- Remove to a designated condemned food storage area away from food preparation and equipment storage, and secured in covered refuse containers or other isolated areas to prevent either service to the public, or accidental contamination of the facility and other food.
- If the food must be retained until the distributor can credit the facility, it must be clearly labeled as “not for sale” and kept in a refrigerated location separate from other food and held for credit.
- Discarded refrigerated food may be recorded by food supplier/distributor.
- The facility should document the type and amount of food, costs and the reason for disposal for insurance and regulatory purposes.

Guidance for Emergency Action Planning for Retail Food Establishments

- Small volumes of food to be discarded can be denatured with a cleaning product (such as bleach) and placed in a covered refuse bin outside the facility.
- Large volumes of food should be stored in covered refuse containers in a secure location and disposed of by a refuse disposal company as soon as possible.
- All food waste is to be disposed of in accordance with state and local waste disposal regulations in a licensed landfill.
- Local landfills should be contacted prior to delivery of food from a private individual or carrier to insure acceptance of the waste.