
Food Safety Fact Sheet



Reopening Your School Kitchen after a Flood

Here Are the Facts



The school nutrition manager is responsible for ensuring the safety of food following an emergency such as a flood. The manager is responsible for supervising the cleaning and sanitizing of the kitchen and equipment. After the clean-up process is complete, the manager should conduct a self inspection to ensure that the kitchen can resume operating safely. If a school kitchen has been required to close due to a flood, it should not re-open until it has been authorized to do so by a local or state regulatory authority.

Introduction

Flood water can damage food and equipment in a school nutrition operation. When the water recedes, debris, germs, mold, and bad odors may be left behind. School nutrition employees must take active steps to clean and sanitize before their school kitchen can reopen.



Clean Facilities

- Wash all interior surfaces of the facility, including floors, walls, and ceilings using potable water and a hot detergent solution. Rinse with clear water to remove detergents and residues and then treat with a sanitizing solution.
- Have the facility checked for mold contamination. If there is mold, it may be removed by cleaning and disinfecting, removing and replacing surfaces, or reconditioning.
- Clean exhaust systems and hoods, making sure to remove any debris. Replace all ventilation air filters. It may be necessary to consult with a professional service technician.

Clean and Sanitize Equipment and Utensils

- Wash metal pans, ceramic dishes, and utensils (including can openers) thoroughly with hot, soapy water. Rinse and then sanitize by boiling in clean water or immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of potable water.
- Wash countertops with hot, soapy water. Rinse and then sanitize by applying a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of potable water. Allow to air-dry.
- Discard any single-use items exposed to flood water. Items that are stored in plastic bags within a cardboard box must be discarded if the cardboard box is exposed to flood water because the plastic bags are not waterproof. Examples include disposable plates or cups.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize all equipment and utensils.
 - ◊ Use a dishwasher or 3-compartment sink.
 - ◊ Use an approved foodservice sanitizer (chlorine, iodine, or quaternary ammonium) at the appropriate concentration or hot water at 180 °F.
 - ◊ Use test strips to check the sanitizer concentration and adjust as needed.
 - ◊ Use a maximum registering thermometer or temperature sensitive strips to check that the hot water reaches 180 °F or the utensil surface reaches 165 °F.
 - ◊ Run empty dishwashers completely through the wash, rinse, and sanitize cycles three times to flush the water lines and make sure the dishwasher is cleaned and sanitized before using it to clean and sanitize equipment and utensils. Check to make sure the sanitizer is at the appropriate concentration or that the water reaches the appropriate temperature.
- Check equipment that has stood in flood waters to determine if the legs of the equipment are solid or tubular. If the equipment has tubular legs, water may have seeped into the tube requiring that the interior of the legs be cleaned and sanitized.
- Use steam to clean equipment as needed.
- Contact your equipment manufacturer to determine appropriate cleaning and sanitizing procedures for equipment that has been submerged in flood water. It may be recommended that equipment be removed from service.
- Clean out all foods and residues from refrigerators and display cases. Follow up by thoroughly washing the inside of the unit with a hot detergent solution and rinsing with clear water to remove all residues. Give special attention to drainage areas, ventilation vents, corners, cracks and crevices, handles, and gaskets.
- Replace all air filters unless they are designed to be cleaned in place.
- Discard all ice in ice machines. Run through three cycles of the ice machine, discarding the ice each time. Clean and sanitize the interior surface following standard operating procedures for food contact surfaces before using the ice machine.
- Gas and electrical equipment should be thoroughly cleaned and checked by the fire department, utility company, or authorized service representative before it is used.

**Remember,
if your kitchen had to close due
to an emergency, it should not
reopen until authorized by your
local or state regulatory authority.**

References

- Food and Drug Administration. (2009). *Restaurants and grocers reopening after hurricanes and flooding*. Available online at www.fda.gov/Food/FoodDefense/Emergencies/FloodsHurricanesPower-Outages/ucml12713.htm
- Food Safety and Inspection Service. (2007). *A consumer's guide to food safety: Severe storms & hurricanes*. Available online at www.fsis.usda.gov/pdf/severe_storms_and_hurricanes_guide.pdf

National Food Service Management Institute
The University of Mississippi
P.O. Drawer 188
University, MS 38677-0188
www.nfsmi.org