

Guidance Document for Assessing Emergency Operation Plans for Food Service Establishments

The Georgia Food Service Rules and Regulations, Chapter 511-6-1 has a provision that allows food service establishments (FSE) to remain ***open for up to two hours*** when there is an interruption to water service, electrical service or natural gas without an Emergency Operation Plan (EOP), provided minimum requirements can be met to ensure food safety during that time. *(Refer to the Water Interruption Guidance Document for more information.)*

For a food service establishment to remain open ***beyond two hours*** in the event of an emergency, there must be an EOP, approved by the local health authority or department ***before*** the event occurs.

An EOP must provide specific guidelines that the food service establishment will follow and detailed information as to how all aspects of the guidelines will be met. This document contains information on what elements should be addressed, at a minimum, within the EOP. Each food service establishment is unique in its operation; therefore, there is no “one size fits all” template that can be used for an EOP.

ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER:

- ☐ **Does the plan specify a length of time the FSE will be able to operate?** *For example: XYZ restaurant has enough bottled water to continue operations for up to one week on a limited menu. After one week, XYZ will close. OR ABC restaurant has a generator that can run all electrical equipment. ABC restaurant will continue normal operations unless there is no gasoline available in the area to operate the generator.*
- ☐ **Does the plan specify the type of emergency it is prepared to handle? Water interruptions only? Electrical? Natural Gas?**
- ☐ **Does the plan include a specific menu of items it will serve during the time the plan is operational? For example, will vegetables that require washing be taken off the menu to conserve water? Will only prepackaged items be served?** *For example: a restaurant that primarily serves sandwiches, salads and fresh vegetables will only use pre-washed, pre-bagged vegetables during the water interruption event. OR The menu will be limited to items on the regular menu such as sandwiches with no lettuce, tomatoes, etc.*
- ☐ **Does the FSE have the capability to boil water on-site?** *For example: A pizza restaurant that has only pizza baking ovens has an electric burner and several large pots that it will use to boil water. OR A restaurant with an electric stove has a propane “fish cooker” that it will use to boil water if the electricity is out and a boil water advisory is in effect after a storm.*
- ☐ **Is the FSE planning to have commercial water and/or ice delivered or is the FSE stockpiling water ahead of time?** *If commercially bottled water is proposed, is there a pre-existing contract in place for the water to be delivered? A large-scale water outage will cause bottled water from nearby stores to be limited due to the high-demand of others in the area. If water is being stockpiled at the FSE, is there enough storage space for the water, and what are the plans for replacing the used water? Will water be delivered at that time, or will the FSE attempt to go purchase water from a nearby store? What measures are in place if the local stores are out of water because of high-demand?*

- ☐ **Will the FSE use disposable plates, utensils, cups, etc. in a water interruption event?** *For example, a boil water advisory is in effect and the dish machine CANNOT be used. The FSE does not have the capability to boil enough water to use in the 3-compartment sink to wash all the pots and pans, utensils and dishes, so customers will use single-service items. OR A do not drink/do not use advisory is in effect and there is not enough potable water for the 3-compartment sink, so customers will be given their food in “to-go” containers.*
- ☐ **If a water outage occurs and will last longer than two hours, and the toilets do not have a tank such that water can be added for flushing, does the FSE have a contract in place for portable toilets to be delivered?** *During a long-term water outage, portable toilets may be in high demand. If the restaurant is unable to get the toilets delivered until a day or two later, the restaurant will be required to close if toilets are not functional.*
- ☐ **If portable toilets are proposed, will they be for employee and customer use? If so, what type of handwashing provisions will be in place for customers?** *For example, the FSE has a pre-existing contract for X number of portable toilets to be delivered along with X number of portable handwashing stations. The restaurant will supply warm water at least 100°F to handwashing stations set up in the back of the parking lot. OR Portable toilets will be used by employees only, and customers will only be able to get food “to-go.” Handwashing stations will be delivered with the portable toilets and warm water will be supplied at 100°F in the portable stations in the parking lot for employees’ use only.*
- ☐ **Does the FSE have the capability to set up temporary handwashing provisions inside the restaurant for employee use?** *For example, a clean and sanitized tea urn will be set up on or immediately adjacent to an existing handwashing sink so that employees can continue to wash their hands in a way that the water from the tea urn will drain into the existing handwashing sink. The tea urn will be filled and maintained with warm water at least 100°F.*
- ☐ **If the FSE’s plan includes continuity of operations during an electrical outage, what measures will be taken for food that requires cold-holding?** *For example, if power goes out, temperatures of all TCS foods in cold-holding units will be taken to ensure they are at 41°F or below. Temperatures will be monitored every hour. Once cold TCS food temperatures rise above 41°F, the foods will be used within four hours. Any foods that remain after four hours will be discarded. (A copy of the temperature log that will be used as the means for monitoring temperatures is required to be submitted as part of the plan.) OR A food service establishment will use large, hard plastic coolers to hold cold food with ice purchased from an approved source. Unpackaged food will be stored in such a manner so that it is not in direct contact with undrained ice.*
- ☐ **If the FSE’s plan includes continuity of operations during an electrical outage, do they plan to use a generator? If so, how many electrical items can be supported by the generator and for how long? [Some infrared toilets rely on electricity to flush]** *For example, the generator that is being proposed has been verified through evaluation of the specification sheets that it can support a walk-in cooler, walk-in freezer, all reach-in coolers, lights and the water heater, etc. OR The generator will only be used to run a reach-in cooler, lights and grill. The restaurant will continue to power the specific electrical items for X number of hours (or days.) [*NOTE: Gasoline supply in the area may be limited if power is out in a large area therefore affecting how long an establishment can run on a generator.]*

- ☐ If the FSE plans to receive food from another location owned by the same permit holder, how will the food be transported and held once it is received at the location experiencing the water, electrical or natural gas interruption? (***TPHC is not allowed for transporting food*** – food must be transported under proper temperatures.) *For example, there are 5 restaurants by the same name with the same owner within a 20-mile radius. Two of the restaurants are affected by electrical outages and lose power to the cold hold units. The two affected units will receive enough cold food for one meal period from the other stores. The food will be loaded into containers that are able to maintain temperatures at 41°F or below. When the food is loaded into the containers, temperatures will be taken before they leave the store. Employees on the receiving end will temp the food items to ensure they arrive at 41°F or below and keep the food in the containers until needed. Temperature checks will be performed every hour to ensure the food does not rise above 41°F. If the food does rise above 41°F, it will be consumed within four hours or discarded, and employees will continue to monitor the temperature throughout the four-hour period.*
- ☐ If the FSE plans to operate using single-service items and will serve customers on-site in the dining area, does the FSE have arrangements with the sanitation company to make more frequent visits to empty the dumpsters if the emergency is an extended event?
- ☐ Does the plan include the person responsible for ensuring all aspects of the operation are being followed and a means to verify any corrective action taken during the event? *For example: “During the operational period under the EOP, each shift manager will ensure that employees are trained and following this plan by conducting a pre-shift meeting and observing employee behavior throughout the shift. Any aspects of the plan found not in compliance, will be addressed immediately by retraining the employees, taking corrective action, and documenting the incidents in the shift manager’s log. Temperatures will be recorded on the logs included in the plan as required.”*
- ☐ Does the plan specify the conditions for when the FSE will close if the plan cannot be followed? *For example: “Restaurant XYZ will close if portable sanitation units cannot be delivered on time.” OR “Restaurant ABC has enough potable water stored on the premises to last for three days. If water is unable to be delivered per our contract with Water Springs water company, then we will close.”*
- ☐ Does the plan include information as to who will inform the health authority that the restaurant will begin operations under the approved EOP? *For example, “The PIC on the premises at the time of the event will notify the health department that the plan is being implemented.”*
- ☐ Does the plan include information as to how the restaurant will resume normal operations once the event is over? This would include specific information about flushing, cleaning and sanitizing ice machines, contacting soda companies to service the dispensing machines, etc.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- ✓ When reviewing these plans, there is not a “One Size Fits All.”
- ✓ Keep in mind the operational capacity of the food service establishment and consider whether what is proposed in the plan is reasonable.

- ✓ A current copy of the plan must be kept in the establishment's file, preferably attached to the facility record in DHD.

For more information:

The Conference for Food Protection has a resource available to help guide the development of an EOP: <http://www.foodprotect.org/guides-documents/emergency-action-plan-for-retail-food-establishment/>

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