

# Safe Food Operations During Temporary Interruptions in Water Service

**Food facilities experiencing an interruption in water service are required to notify the Food Safety Program.**

It is difficult to safely prepare and serve food when there is an interruption to the water supply. Many facilities choose to suspend operations until water service has been restored. If you choose to continue operations without a water supply, it is important to take steps to make sure that food is being prepared safely.

Allegheny County Health Department's Food Safety Program has approved the following alternative procedures. Following these steps will reduce the risk of foodborne illness when water service has been interrupted.

Normal Operation	Safe Alternative Options
Preparing and cooking food, including reconstituting dried food	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use food that was prepared before water service was interrupted.</li> <li>2. Use prepared foods from an approved source outside of the affected area.</li> <li>3. Use potable water from an alternate approved source (bottled water).</li> </ol>
Preparing hot and cold beverages, including carbonated soda fountain beverages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Replace with bottled or canned alternatives.</li> <li>2. Use potable water from an alternate approved source (bottled water).</li> </ol>
Ice making	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Purchase prepackaged potable ice.</li> <li>2. When water is restored, take appropriate steps to clean and sanitize your ice maker.</li> </ol>
Thawing frozen foods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thaw foods in the refrigerator.</li> <li>2. Thaw foods as part of the cooking process.</li> </ol>
Washing fresh produce	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wash with potable water from an alternate approved source (bottled water).</li> <li>2. Use pre-washed, Ready-to-eat produce.</li> <li>3. Use frozen or canned products.</li> </ol>
Spraying or misting produce	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discontinue the practice until water service has been restored.</li> <li>2. When water is restored, flush the produce mister before using on produce</li> </ol>
Employee Handwashing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use potable water from an alternate approved source.</li> <li>2. Provide a closed container with spigot above an existing sink. Supplement with a hand sanitizer.</li> <li>3. Handle food only with utensils or gloves (no barehand contact with food).</li> <li>4. Use prepackaged towelettes containing antiseptic (Class I or Class II facilities only).</li> </ol>



## Allegheny County Health Department Food Safety Program

2121 Noblestown Rd., Ste. 210 • Pittsburgh, PA 15205

Phone: (412) 578-8044 • Fax: (412) 578-8190

E-mail: [foodsafety@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:foodsafety@alleghenycounty.us)

Normal Operation	Safe Alternative Options
<b>Cleaning and sanitizing tableware, kitchenware, vending machine components, equipment, and surfaces</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use only single-use tableware and kitchenware.</li> <li>2. Limit the menu to reduce the need for water.</li> <li>3. Limit or discontinue the use of specialized equipment like slicers, meat grinders, or other clean in place machinery.</li> <li>4. Use potable water from an alternate approved source (bottled water).</li> <li>5. Take components to permitted facility outside of affected area for cleaning and sanitization.</li> <li>6. Sweep or use other waterless cleaning method for floors.</li> </ol>
<b>Storing dispensing utensils (scoops, spoons) in dipper well</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Store utensils in food (handle must be exposed).</li> <li>2. Store utensils clean and dry.</li> </ol>
<b>Disposing of scraps in garbage disposal</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dispose of scraps in trash containers with other refuse.</li> </ol>
<b>Flushing employee toilets</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use portable toilets.</li> <li>2. Use non-potable water for flushing.</li> </ol>
<b>Operating customer toilet rooms</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Temporarily close customer toilet rooms (limit food service to takeout only).</li> <li>2. Provide potable water for handwashing from an alternative approved source and flush toilets with non-potable water.</li> <li>3. Provide prepackaged towelettes containing antiseptic for handwashing and flush toilets with non-potable water.</li> </ol>

**When water service is restored:**

- Flush water supply lines:
  - Run cold water from the sink furthest away from where water enters the building for 5 minutes
  - Run cold water on all other faucets for 1 minute
  - Run cold water on all other plumber equipment for at least 1 minute. Examples of other equipment include:
    - Food processing and cooking equipment
    - Drink machines (coffee, soda, etc.)
    - Drinking fountains
    - Ice machines
    - Spray misters
- Replace all water filters connected to plumbed equipment
- Run water softeners through a regeneration cycle
- Wash, rinse, sanitize, and air dry all food contact surfaces
- Clean and sanitize the ice maker according to manufacturer’s instructions.
- **Contact the ACHD’s Food Safety Program with any questions or concerns.**



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