



What to Do When a Tornado or Strong Winds Causes Damage

A severe storm may cause one or more imminent health hazards in addition to structural damage, such as power outages, interruptions in water service, flooding, fires or other threats to the safety of your food supply. Information regarding response to these events is available at www.houstonconsumer.org.

The first concern during a storm that may bring high winds or tornadoes is for personal safety for the customers and employees within your establishment.

Determine the Safety of your Facility and Operating Conditions

- ☐ Exercise caution before entering or moving around if entrapped in a storm-damaged building.
- ☐ Call 911 if entrapped in the building or the power lines are down.
- ☐ **If there is significant damage or another imminent health hazard exists, close your establishment and do not conduct any food operations including food preparation and handling, warewashing, and cleaning.**
- ☐ Establishments with a BCHS-accepted Emergency Preparedness Plan may implement their plan for operating during an extended power outage and/or interruption in water service **if and only if** no other imminent health hazard exists.
- ☐ Notify the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) at www.houstonconsumer.org, chs@houstontx.gov, or (832) 393-5100 of your establishment's closure or the implementation of a BCHS-accepted plan.
- ☐ Contact the Houston Permitting Center at (832) 394-8810; 1002 Washington, Houston, 77002; 8 AM-4:30 PM. when replacing large floor-mounted equipment, repairing or replacing interior surfaces, or repairing, replacing or remodeling the facility's structure. Refer to [Recovering from Flood and/or Structural Damage](#).

Protect your Employees

- ☐ Ensure your employees are wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when entering your facility to guard against injury from broken glass and debris.
- ☐ Follow the procedures below for food assessment and disposal and facility cleanup if employees are involved in the cleanup.
- ☐ If cleanup begins before a BCHS health officer arrives, document the type and pounds of food discarded and the method of disposal.

DISCARD, CLEAN, AND SANITIZE

Assess Food and Non-Food Items

- ☐ Examine area for glass fragments, some not clearly visible, that may have pierced food packaging or lodged deeply into food items. Be extremely cautious with:

- Any unopened package or food, including ice and beverages
- Porous food packaged in fabric, plastic, or paper bags, or cardboard cartons
- Fruits and vegetables
- Disposable dishware and utensils
- Filters, purifiers, and beverage cartridges attached to equipment.
- Refer to the Food and Equipment Salvage Chart to determine what food, equipment, tableware, furnishings, and single-service items must be discarded and what can be kept if subjected to a long term power or water outage, flooding, or a fire. Discard all suspect foods and single-service items according to Proper Disposal of Contaminated Food.

When in Doubt, Throw it Out!

Clean and Sanitize

Do not clean the facility and equipment if the water supply is not potable (safe), the wastewater system is not functioning, and/or electricity is unavailable for heating water and providing sufficient lighting for cleaning.

- ☐ Determine whether the water, wastewater, and electrical systems are operational.
- ☐ Thoroughly vacuum floors and seating areas to ensure removal of hard-to-see glass shards. Double bag vacuumed waste before discarding.
- ☐ Wash and rinse furniture and floors.
- ☐ Wash, rinse, and sanitize all food-contact surfaces, work stations, utensils, dishes, silverware, and glassware.

Expect Pests

- ☐ Confirm that any pest management company you use is licensed.
- ☐ Ensure that any rodents/pests that may have entered the facility are no longer present.
- ☐ Expect to replace traps, bait stations, and treatments that may have been displaced or damaged and to add other equipment to minimize the invasion of pests.
- ☐ Remove dead pests and droppings and sanitize any food-contact surfaces that may have come in contact with them.
- ☐ Dispose of contaminated or spoiled solid foods in closed containers to prevent rodent and fly harborage.
- ☐ Seal all openings into the facility to prevent future entry of pests or rodents.
- ☐ Clear trash and debris immediately in and around your establishment (downed tree limbs, cardboard boxes, broken sheetrock, old equipment and any other damaged materials).
- ☐ Keep grass short and cut. Remove dense brush and shrubbery.

PREPARE TO REOPEN

Meet the Requirements for Resuming Operations

- ☐ Refer to the Requirements to Resume Normal Operations.

Contact BCHS at www.houstonconsumer.org or chs@houstontx.gov

- ☐ To request approval to resume normal operations once the requirements are met.

OR

To request a pre-opening inspection if permits and/or approval were needed from the Houston Permitting Center.

THE BUREAU OF CONSUMER HEALTH SERVICES MUST GRANT APPROVAL FOR YOUR ESTABLISHMENT TO RESUME FOOD OPERATIONS.

Please contact the Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) with any questions or concerns.

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