



## What to Do When Your Establishment Floods

Flood waters can contain rotting food, feces, chemicals and disease-causing organisms which can contaminate your food establishment and easily cause foodborne illnesses.

**\*\*\*There may be health and safety risks inside your establishment.\*\*\***

### THINK SAFETY

#### First Steps – Get Help

- Determine that the building is safe to enter.
- Call utility companies to ensure the safety of gas and electrical lines.
- Do not conduct any food-related operations such as food preparation, food handling, and equipment/utensil cleaning if the entire establishment is flooded.**
- You may continue operations in an area of your establishment that is unaffected by flooding or structural damage as long as all food safety requirements can be met.
- Notify the Houston Health Department Bureau of Consumer Health Services (BCHS) of your establishment's operating status (open, partially open, closed) at [www.houstonconsumer.org](http://www.houstonconsumer.org), [chs@houstontx.gov](mailto:chs@houstontx.gov), or (832) 393-5100.
- 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](#).
- Consider hiring professionals to remove health threats caused by mold, asbestos, harmful vapors, disease-causing organisms, chemicals, and other hazardous materials and/or a professional water damage restoration company for widespread damage.
- If employees are involved in the cleanup, follow the procedures below for employee protection, food disposal, and cleanup.
- If cleanup begins before a BCHS health officer arrives, document the type and pounds of food discarded and the method of disposal. Keep the records for health inspection and insurance purposes.
- Ensure a food establishment manager or the person in charge is responsible for consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

#### Protect Employees Involved in the Cleanup

***Always use appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to enter and clean a flooded establishment.***

- Provide PPE for your employees such as:
  - Eye protection
  - Rubber boots and gloves that can be washed and disinfected after use
  - Protective clothing (coveralls or long-sleeved shirts and long pants or disposable outerwear)
  - N-95 filtration mask that carries the NIOSH (National Institutes of Safety and Health)

designation if removing mold

- ❑ Provide last minute training for your employees to:
  - Properly wear PPE and avoid skin contact with flood water
  - Immediately report any injuries or exposures during cleanup to the person in charge.
  - Follow procedures for safely removing mold, wearing a properly fitted N-95 mask or use a mold remediation specialist
  - Remove protective gloves, footwear, and clothing before walking between contaminated areas and other areas of the establishment
  - Use double handwashing procedures immediately after working in contaminated areas followed by a hand sanitizer
  - Clean and disinfect hand sinks and faucets after use to prevent transferring contamination to others
  - Follow OSHA rules for handling detergents, disinfectants, and other chemicals used in the cleaning process. ***Never use bleach in a closed space. Open windows and doors first.***

## DISCARD, CLEAN, AND DISINFECT

### Rid Your Physical Facility of Heavy Filth, Water, and Damaged Items

- ❑ Remove all sewage, mud, silt, or other solids first.
- ❑ Remove any excess water including standing water located beneath floors where refrigeration or electrical conduits are located.
- ❑ Remove and replace:
  - Wall board that has been water damaged. Cement and concrete walls that have mold damage may be able to be reconditioned.
  - Water damaged ventilation systems that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected
  - All ventilation air filters
- ❑ Discard:
  - All refrigerated display cases, storage cases, or other refrigerator equipment if the insulation, door gaskets, hoses, etc. were damaged by flood or liquefied food items
  - Soft, porous materials such as plastic, rubber, or wood items saturated by flood water since they cannot be safely cleaned and sanitized. This includes wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils and storage containers, disposable silverware or plastic utensils, as well as cracked dishware.
  - Food equipment such as toasters, filters, purifiers, and beverage cartridges attached to equipment
  - All food and packaging materials that have been in direct contact with flood water and anything that cannot be washed and disinfected
  - All contaminated and temperature-abused products from all refrigerated display and storage cases

***Refer to the Food and Equipment Salvage Chart and Proper Disposal of Contaminated Food to determine what food, equipment, utensils, furnishings, and single-service items must be discarded and what may be kept, and how to properly dispose of contaminated and unsafe items.***

### Prepare to Disinfect

***EPA-Registered Disinfectants for Norovirus should be used to disinfect surfaces contaminated by flood water or sewage. It is extremely important that the following safety precautions are followed when using disinfectants.***

- Know what disinfectant you are using and follow the manufacturer’s safety precautions (Safety Data Sheet or SDS) and instructions for use. Some disinfectant solutions can be toxic and can be harmful to the eyes, skin, and airways.
- Do not use disinfectant solution on food-contact surfaces unless the surfaces have been contaminated with flood water or sewage.
- Ensure disinfected food-contact surfaces are rinsed thoroughly of the disinfectant solution and then sanitized with an approved sanitizer (chlorine, iodine or quaternary ammonia).
- Chlorine and quaternary ammonia may be used for both disinfection and sanitization but the chemical concentration for disinfection is much higher than that used for sanitization.
- Do not use the disinfectant solution to sanitize if using the same chemical. Make a separate sanitizing solution.
- Contact times on the manufacturer's label must be followed for disinfection and sanitization to be effective.

**Bleach Guidance (5-6%) for Disinfecting After a Flood\***

- Use chlorine bleach in a well-ventilated area and wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as goggles, masks, gloves, and a covering for all exposed skin. Do not mix chlorine bleach with ammonia.
- Wash surfaces with hot soapy water and rinse before disinfection.
- Then sanitize any food-contact surfaces with a sanitizing solution (50-100 ppm chlorine) as indicated below.

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>PPM</b>	<b>Dilution</b>	<b>Contact Time</b>	<b>Final Step after Disinfection</b>
Disinfection - Nonfood Contact Surfaces	<b>2400</b>	¾ cup regular chlorine bleach/1 gallon water	5 minutes	Rinse thoroughly then air dry
Disinfection - Food-Contact Surfaces	<b>2400</b>	¾ cup regular chlorine bleach/1 gallon water	5 minutes	Rinse thoroughly then sanitize
Sanitization - Food-Contact Surface After Disinfection	<b>50-100</b>	1 tbsp chlorine bleach/1 gallon water	10 seconds	Air dry

\*For concentrated (8.25%) chlorine bleach, use 1/2 cup bleach/1 gallon water for disinfection and 2 tsp bleach/1 gallon water for sanitization.

- Use only regular chlorine bleach with a sodium hypochlorite concentration of 5-6% or 8.25%. Do not use expired, scented, or splashless bleach.
- Steam cleaning may be preferable for carpets and upholstery. Chlorine bleach may permanently stain some surfaces.

- Other [EPA-Registered Disinfectants for Norovirus](#), following manufacturer's directions, may be used.

## Clean, Repair, and Disinfect Affected Equipment and Hard Surfaces

***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.
- Use a permitted transporter to service a flooded grease trap.
- Clean, repair, and disinfect floors, walls, piping, ceilings, HVAC/ventilation systems, and other areas affected by flood waters or other damage from the storm to prevent mold growth.
- Clean all hard surfaces (cabinets, counters, and side walls of large equipment) with hot water and detergent. Rinse with water, disinfect, then air dry. Cabinets and other surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected before food, dishes, or cooking utensils can be stored in them.
- Thoroughly wash the inside and outside of refrigerated storage and display cases with a hot detergent solution, rinse free of detergents and residues, disinfect, then air dry.
  - Special attention should be given to drainage areas, ventilation vents, corners, cracks and crevices, door handles, and door gaskets
- Refer to [Walk-In Cooler Restoration After a Flood](#) for information on cleaning and repairing walk-in refrigeration units.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect stove units and have them checked by an authorized service representative prior to use.
- Consult professional service technicians as needed.
- Use fans, dehumidifiers, or air conditioners to speed the drying process.

## Clean and Disinfect All Affected Cookware, Tableware, and Utensils

- Remove detachable parts to affected pots, pans, and utensils such as blades, plastic or wooden handles, and screens prior to cleaning.
- Boil silverware, metal utensils, and pots and pans in water for at least 10 minutes or use a heat-sanitizing dish machine. Chlorine bleach should not be used because it reacts with many metals and causes them to darken.
  - Ensure mechanical heat-sanitizing dishwashing machines provide a 180°F final sanitizing rinse.
  - Provide a maximum registering thermometer or temperature-sensitive tape to check that hot water reaches 180°F or the utensil surface reaches 165°F.
- Clean iron pots, pans, and utensils by:
  - Washing with soap and water, using a stiff brush, scouring powder, or steel wool
  - Wiping items with an oil-saturated cloth or a commercial rust remover if rust remains. If using a commercial rust remover, be sure to follow the label instructions.
  - Washing again in hot, soapy water followed by rinsing and disinfecting an - [EPA Registered Disinfectant for Norovirus](#) acceptable for iron cookware
  - Rinsing thoroughly after disinfecting
  - Sanitizing with an approved sanitizer, then air drying
  - Re-seasoning when dry

- Clean all other affected cookware and tableware with hot water and detergent. Rinse with water then disinfect with an approved disinfectant appropriate for the surface. Rinse thoroughly after disinfecting, sanitize and then air dry.

## Use This Checklist for Water-Use Equipment

***If the following equipment is still usable after being affected by flood waters, follow the manufacturer's or service technician's advice for disinfection and sanitization.***

***If the following equipment has not been contaminated by flood waters, clean and sanitize according to the manufacturer's instructions or the information below.***

- Dishwashers
  - o Run the empty dishwasher through the wash-rinse-sanitize cycle three times to flush the water lines and ensure that the dishwasher is cleaned and sanitized internally before it is used to wash equipment and utensils.
- Sinks
  - o Thoroughly clean and sanitize all sinks before resuming use.
- Water Filter Systems - including autofill equipment
  - o Clean and sanitize the water filter housings.
  - o Prior to the startup of the equipment, all filter(s) should be removed and replaced if not designed to be cleaned in place. If designed to be cleaned in place, follow the cleaning and sanitization. procedures recommended by the water filter manufacturer or equipment service representative.
  - o Systems must be fitted with a new water filter cartridge before being placed back into service.
- Ice Makers
  - o Run three complete ice-making cycles and discard all ice made during those cycles.
  - o Clean and sanitize the icemaker bin.
- Commercial Produce Mistlers
  - o Remove all produce from the bins under the mistlers.
  - o Flush water through the mistlers for at least 10-15 minutes.
  - o If removable, disconnect, clean, and sanitize the misting nozzles.
  - o Clean and sanitize the produce bins prior to restocking.
- Fountain Dispensers
  - o Run each beverage valve on each dispenser for at least four minutes.
  - o Remove, clean, and sanitize dispensing nozzles and associated removable parts.
  - o Clean and sanitize any ice bins.
- Frozen Beverage Dispensers
  - o Discard all products in the dispenser(s).
  - o Call for service or follow equipment manufacturer's recommendations for cleaning and sanitization.
- Juice Machines
  - o Flush water through the unit for at least five minutes on first flavor.
  - o Flush water through any additional flavors on same unit for at least one minute.
  - o Call for service and/or follow equipment manufacturer's recommendations for cleaning and sanitization.

- Coffee Makers /Tea Brewers
  - o Brew and discard at least four pots of hot water per unit.

## Clean the Cleaning Tools

- Discard contaminated linens and clothing affected by flood water or used during cleanup.  
**OR**  
Use a commercial laundry service that can properly disinfect the items.
- Discard mop heads and any cleaning tools that contacted flood water.

## MANAGE WASTE AND INCREASE PEST CONTROL

### Dispose of Waste Properly

- Refer to Proper Disposal of Contaminated Food for:
  - o Identification and separation of temperature-abused and contaminated food
  - o Methods for handling small and large volumes of food
  - o How additional waste will be handled
  - o Information regarding the sale of distressed (contaminated) food to licensed food salvage establishments

### 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 FOR REOPENING

### Meet Requirements to Resume Operations

- Refer to Requirements to Resume Normal Operations.

### Contact BCHS at [www.houstonconsumer.org](http://www.houstonconsumer.org) or [chs@houstontx.gov](mailto: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 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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