August 30, 2019

To: Food facility operators in Santa Barbara County
RE: Preparations for Power Outages

Dear Food Facility Operator;

As you may know, some electric utilities in California (including PG&E & Southern California Edison (SCE)) have announced plans to shut off power to affected areas during high fire risk weather in an effort to help prevent wildfires. These Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) may last for more than 48 hours. Electrical power may be turned off for other reasons as well. While Environmental Health Services (EHS) can provide technical and regulatory support to food facilities during emergencies, each food facility operator is responsible for complying with food safety guidelines and applicable laws. Please be aware that:

1. All food facilities in Santa Barbara County should take steps now to prepare for potential loss of electricity lasting for more than 48 hours.

2. A power outage lasting more than one hour will require immediate self-closure of your facility if you do not have an adequate alternative source of energy for providing refrigeration, hot water, cooking, cooking ventilation, and hot holding. Food facilities without mechanical refrigeration must close during power outages. Exception: Food facilities may continue to sell commercially prepackaged, unopened, fully labeled, shelf-stable items such as canned foods and bottled water as well as whole, uncut produce.

3. If you intend to supply your food facility with electricity by using a generator, you may need a permit from the Air Pollution Control District. Fuel storage for generators may also require a permit from Environmental Health Services CUPA.

4. After a power outage, you will need to destroy any potentially hazardous (perishable) foods that were not held under proper temperature control during the power outage. Attached is an informational handout to provide guidance on whether food affected by the power outage needs to be destroyed.

5. Food facilities should document what they do during a power outage, including recording food temperatures / destruction, and should keep a copy of this documentation.
Food facilities that have self-closed during a power outage, properly safeguarded foods, destroyed any foods affected by a loss of heating or refrigeration, and have documented their actions may reopen to the public once power is restored and their equipment is working properly. Before reopening, make sure that:
   a. Hot water is available at all sinks;
   b. Refrigerators are capable of holding foods at 41 degrees F or below;
   c. Freezers are capable of holding foods in a solid frozen state;
   d. All electrical appliances and equipment are operational;
   e. Potentially hazardous foods that have been held out of approved temperatures for more than 2 hours have been discarded.

For more resources and information about how to prepare your food facility for a power outage, please visit “Preparing Your Food Facility for Emergencies” on the Environmental Health Services website at: http://countyofsbo.org/phd/ehs/emergencies.sbc

Our EHS staff is dedicated to helping you keep food safe. Please contact us if you have any questions or would like additional information. We can be reached by email at ehsadmin@sbcphd.org or by telephone at 805-681-4900 (Santa Barbara) / 805-346-8460 (Santa Maria).

Attached: “Guidelines for Food Safety at Retail Establishments During Temporary Power Outages,” published by the California Department of Public Health Food & Drug Branch.