

Guidance for Meat and Poultry Handlers for Re-opening After Flooding



***This guidance has been created in response to the state-wide flooding event 7/10/23.*

The information is for licensed meat and poultry handlers including commercial and custom slaughter and processing facilities, retailers, wholesale distributors, and warehouses. Take the following actions to re-open after damage to your facility and food stocks due to flooding and power outages. If you are a commercial processing facility working under a grant of inspection, please also see the requirements listed in [9 CFR § 318.14 Adulteration of product by polluted water; procedure for handling](#).

Closing Your Facility

You must close your facility for business if you have one or more of the following hazards:

- Any part of the food establishment was flooded – all flood waters are considered contaminated
- Sewage backed up into the facility
- The plumbing does not drain, and toilets are not usable by staff
- Drinking water supply for the establishment was flooded, and potable water is not available from alternate sources or by following [Boil Water Advisory guidelines](#) issued by the Department of Health or local authorities
- Customers or staff must walk through sewage-contaminated water to get into the facility
- There is no power
- Other hazards that may compromise food safety in the facility

Inspection Before Re-opening

Conduct a complete self-inspection to make sure that normal operations can be resumed safely and without compromising food safety. Only enter the building with caution, and with the guidance of structural and electrical experts. If your establishment was closed by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture Meat Inspection Service (MIS) you must have a re-opening inspection by the MIS before resuming business.

Sanitize

Decontaminate and sanitize equipment and structural surfaces that are salvageable. Thoroughly wash and rinse surfaces before sanitizing. Follow decontamination and sanitization procedures using chemical sanitization, e.g. chlorine bleach at a concentration of 100-200 ppm (1 tablespoon bleach in 1 gallon of potable water), Quaternary Ammonium at a concentration of 200 ppm, or other approved sanitizers. Proper decontamination will eliminate harmful microorganisms, chemical residues, or filth that could pose a food safety risk.

***Adapted from VDH Food and Lodging [Guidance for Food Establishments for Re-Opening After Flooding](#)*

Physical Facilities

- If you have a well that has been flooded, the water should be disinfected and tested to confirm it is safe after floodwaters recede. If you suspect that your well may be contaminated, information is available on the Health Department website for [disinfection procedures for drinking water](#). Following disinfection procedures, the well should be tested to verify that the water is potable.
- If you have a public water supply, confirm that potable water is available from the water operator. Follow [Boil Water Advisory](#) information if potable water is not confirmed.
- Thoroughly wash all physical facility interior surfaces (e.g. floors, walls and ceilings), using potable water, with a hot detergent solution, rinsed free of detergents and residues, and treated with a sanitizing solution. (See section above on sanitizing.)
- Prevent or clean up mold. Structural components of the building (e.g. walls, piping, ceiling and HVAC system/ventilation systems) affected by flood waters or other damage, should be cleaned, repaired, and disinfected where possible. Remove and destroy wall board that has been water damaged. Cement walls that have mold damage can be reconditioned.
- Thoroughly clean and free debris from any exhaust systems. Consult professional service technicians as needed. Water damaged ventilation systems that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized should be removed and replaced. In all cases, replace all ventilation air filters.

Equipment

- Wash all utensils used for handling or processing meat and poultry products with soap and hot water. Rinse and then sanitize by boiling in potable water or immersing for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of drinking water or other approved sanitizer. Follow instructions on the sanitizer label for the correct concentration.
- Wash all food contact surfaces (tables, cutting surfaces, equipment etc.) and non-food contact surfaces with soap and hot water. Rinse and then sanitize by applying a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of drinking water or other approved sanitizer. Air dry.
- Refrigerated display and storage cases and other refrigerator equipment used to store meat and poultry should be cleared of all contaminated products and their juices prior to cleaning.
- Refrigerated storage equipment should be thoroughly washed inside and outside with a hot detergent solution and rinsed free of detergents and residues. Give special attention to lighting, drainage areas, ventilation vents, corners, cracks and crevices, door handles and door gaskets. Treat all clean surfaces with a sanitizing solution. (See section above on sanitizing.)
- If the insulation, door gaskets, hoses etc. are damaged by flood or liquefied food items, replace or discard these refrigerated display cases and storage cases and other refrigerator equipment.
- Remove and replace all filters on equipment if they are not designed to be cleaned in place.
- Replace all ice machine filters and flush ice machine water lines, for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Discard all ice in ice machines. Clean and sanitize the interior surfaces (ice making

compartment and storage bin). Run the ice machine process through three cycles and discard ice with each cycle.

- Clean and sanitize all sinks thoroughly before resuming use.
- Inspect equipment to be sure it is operational and that all aspects of its integrity are maintained.
- Stove and/or smoking units should be thoroughly cleaned and checked by the fire department, local utility company, or authorized service representative prior to use.

Maintaining Food Temperatures

- Verify that all open-top refrigerated and freezer display cases, walk-in refrigerators, and walk-in freezers are capable of consistently maintaining cold holding temperatures ($\leq 40^{\circ}\text{F}$ or in a frozen state) before food items are placed in the units.
- Ensure that heating equipment can heat to the appropriate cooking temperature ($\geq 135^{\circ}\text{F}$) for raw animal foods. Ensure that cooling equipment can maintain foods at the appropriate ($\leq 40^{\circ}\text{F}$) temperature.
- Verify that all equipment used for food preparation (e.g., cooking, cooling, and reheating) is functioning and properly calibrated prior to use.

Food Source and Receipt

- All meat and poultry products, including raw, shelf-stable, and ready-to-eat meat and poultry products should only be received from an inspected and passed source (unless received for custom exempt processing)
- Meat and poultry products should be received by a person who is responsible for ensuring that food packages meet temperature requirements and are intact with no breaks, seams, or other openings. Canned meat and poultry should not be swollen or have any dents or punctures in the cans or soiled labels.
- Meat and poultry requiring temperature control should be received in a frozen state or at temperatures less than 40°F for refrigerated storage.

Pest Control

- Ensure that any rodents/pests that may have entered the facility are no longer present. Remove dead pests and sanitize any food-contact surfaces that have come in contact with pests.
- Seal all openings into the facility to prevent future entry of pests or rodents.
- Dispose of contaminated or spoiled solid foods in closed containers for removal to prevent rodent and fly harborage.