

Sewage Backup

For the purpose of this guidance, a sewage backup means the overflow of sewage from equipment or plumbing facilities within a food establishment. The Food Code defines sewage as liquid waste that contains animal or vegetable matter in suspension or solution and may also include liquids containing chemicals in solution. Clear water waste (i.e. ice bin/machine drainage, condensation from refrigeration and air conditioning equipment) is not considered sewage. For single events affecting an individual establishment, the permit holder must report to the regulatory authority. Assess the situation. Immediately discontinue operation if a safe operation cannot be maintained using an alternative procedure. Follow the appropriate emergency procedures if approved by the regulatory authority or remain closed until granted approval to re-open by the regulatory authority.

In the event of an emergency involving a sewage backup, appropriate food establishment responses must be taken after an assessment of multiple factors including but not limited to:

- The complexity and scope of food operations,
- The duration of the emergency event,
- The impact on other critical infrastructure and services (example: food, equipment, utensils, linens, single-service/use items, employee health), and
- The availability of alternative procedures that can be used to meet Food Code and Food Law requirements.

A food establishment manager (or the "Person-in-Charge") is responsible for conducting both initial and ongoing assessments to ensure consistent compliance with food safety requirements.

When There is a Sewage Backup

The following are temporary alternative procedures that can be taken to address specific affected food operations during a sewage backup emergency.

Affected Operations

General - Sewage from equipment directly connected to the plumbing system is either slow to drain or does not drain

General Procedures

- Remove the affected equipment/fixture from service
And
- Remove the obstruction or call a service company
- Thoroughly clean any spills with a detergent solution followed by a sanitizer solution
- Keep foot traffic away from area
- Use other appliances or fixtures in the establishment that are properly operating.

Handwashing

All handwashing sinks in the establishment do not drain.

Alternative Procedure

- Chemically treated (wet nap) towelettes (not to be used for bare hand contact) may be used for cleaning hands if the food items offered are prepackaged or otherwise protected from contamination by hands AND a handwashing facility is available at the toilet room location.

Or

- Hot water can be placed into a 5-gallon insulated container with a spigot which can be turned on to allow clean, warm water to flow over one's hands into another container. Provide suitable hand cleaner, disposable towels, and a waste receptacle. The container may only be emptied into an operational janitor sink or toilet.

Or

- Discontinue operation.

Toilet Facilities

All toilet facilities do not drain

Alternative Procedure

- Toilet rooms that may not be conveniently located but are accessible to employees during all hours of operation, may be used until water service is restored.

Or

- Discontinue operation if no alternate toilet facilities are available.

Culinary Sinks

All sinks required for thawing food, washing fruits and vegetables, cooling food, etc., do not drain.

Alternative Procedure

- Thaw food in the refrigerator or as part of the cooking process
- Use pre-washed packaged produce
- Use frozen/canned fruits and vegetables that do not require washing
- Use alternate cooling methods
- Modify the menu to avoid procedures requiring the use of a culinary sink.

Warewashing Equipment

All dish machines, 3-compartment sinks, pot sinks do not drain

Alternative Procedure

- Discontinue dish/utensil washing and use single-service/use items
- Discontinue affected operations after supply of clean equipment, utensils, single-service items is exhausted.

Janitor/Utility Sink

Utility sink does not drain

Alternative Procedure

- Discontinue the use of the janitor sink
- Dump mop water into a toilet
- Discontinue operation if the physical facility cannot be maintained in a sanitary condition.

Continuous Overflow of Sewage into the Establishment

Sewage continues to backup into the building after the individual appliance(s) have been removed from service

Alternative Procedure

- Discontinue operation.

After a Sewage Backup

Recovery involves the necessary steps for re-opening and returning to a safe, normal operation.

A food establishment that was ordered or otherwise required to cease operations may not re-open until authorization has been granted by the regulatory authority.

Determine the cause of the problem and take appropriate corrective action.

- In the case of plugged drain lines, the permit holder will:
 - Contact a service company to find and remove the obstruction.
 - Replace worn or damaged plumbing as needed.
- In case the onsite sewage disposal system is malfunctioning:
 - Contact the local health department for permit requirements.
 - Contact a sewage pumping contractor to pump the septic tank and haul away sewage to an approved disposal site until repairs can be made.
 - If necessary, barricade the affected area to keep the public and employees away from areas having exposed sewage.
 - Contact a sewage disposal system installation contractor to arrange for repairs to be made.

Personal Health and Safety Considerations for Employees Involved in clean-up

- Wear eye protection
- Wear rubber boots that can be washed and sanitized after the event
- Wear protective clothing such as coveralls

Guidance for Emergency Action Planning for Retail Food Establishments

- Do not allow employees to walk between the affected area and other areas of the establishment without removing footwear and protective clothing
- Follow OSHA rules for handling detergents, sanitizers, and other chemicals used in the cleaning process
- Handwashing – Immediately after working with contaminated materials and before engaging in food preparation activities (working with exposed food, clean equipment and utensils, unwrapped single-service/use articles)
 - Double hand washing: Clean hands and exposed portions of the arms using a cleaning compound in a lavatory that is properly equipped by vigorously rubbing together the surfaces of their lathered hands and arms for at least 20 seconds and thoroughly rinsing with clean water. Repeat
 - Dry hands using disposable towels
 - Use a disposable towel to turn off the water to prevent re-contaminating the hands
 - Follow-up with a hand sanitizer
 - Have janitorial staff clean the lavatory faucets and other portions of the lavatory after use to prevent transferring any contamination to food handlers.

General Clean-up

- All damaged food equipment, utensils, linens, and single-service items must be destroyed and properly disposed of.
- Floors, walls, furnishings, carpets, utensils, and equipment damaged beyond salvage must be removed and replaced as necessary.
- Affected walls, floors, and equipment surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water, rinsed, and sanitized. Carpets should be either removed or effectively cleaned
- Remove wet materials. Dispose of any materials that cannot be effectively cleaned and sanitized.
- Remove any standing sewage.
- Clean and sanitize any utensils and equipment in the affected area.
- Use a detergent solution to clean floors, equipment, and other affected areas followed by a clean water rinse.
 - Sanitize the floor and any other affected areas by using an approved chlorine sanitizer/disinfectant to equal 500 parts per million chlorine solution or equivalent.
 - Air-dry the affected area.
 - Launder or discard mop heads and other cleaning aids that contacted the sewage.
 - Alternative measure: Hire a janitorial service having expertise in cleaning food establishments exposed to sewage backups.

Contaminated Linens, Single-Service/Use Items

- Launder any linens or uniforms in contact with sewage
 - Launder separately from other linens
 - Use bleach
 - Use a mechanical dryer
- Discard any single-service/use items in contact with sewage.

General Food Salvage Assessment

Discard any food or food packaging materials that have come into contact with sewage. Very few food or beverage items can be saved after being exposed to sewage. Food items in soft packaging or with screw-top lids must be destroyed. In some cases canned goods in metal cans or rigid plastic containers can be saved. Even so, the condition of the can is another limiting factor. The presence of rust, soil, or destroyed labeling precludes salvage.

Sewage can make foods unsafe to eat especially if packaging is contaminated. If sewage has covered, splashed, dripped on or seeped into the package, **discard** the following foods

- Alcoholic beverages: Refer to your local regulatory authority for salvage or destruction.
- Exposed foods, bulk foods, fresh produce, meat, poultry, fish and eggs;
- Any foods packaged in paper, plastic, cloth, or fiber;
- Cardboard boxes, even if the contents seem dry, including cereals, pasta products, rice, salt;
- Foods with cardboard seals, such as mayonnaise and salad dressing, or foil or cellophane packages;
- Food in glass jars, including unopened jars with waxed paper, foil, cellophane or cloth covers;
- Foods, liquids or beverages in crown-capped bottles or containers with pull-tab tops, corks or screw caps;
- All opened containers and packages; foods in bags or canisters;
- Cans that are dented, leaking, bulging or rusted; and
- Cans that have been tossed about and are far from their normal storage spot (possibility of pinholes or seam fractures).
- Cans may not be sold without all required labeling information. Therefore, cans with damaged labels should be discarded.

Salvaged Goods – Reconditioning

If the quantities of food involved are large (e.g. a large supermarket or a food warehouse), it may be feasible to attempt salvage for either human or animal consumption. The items must either be destroyed or moved to approved firms that have reconditioning capability. Such

activity must be coordinated with the Massachusetts Food Protection Program and the local health department.

Disposal of Food

If it is determined that food must be discarded:

- Remove to a designated condemned food storage area away from food preparation and equipment storage, and secured in covered refuse containers or other isolated areas to prevent either service to the public, or accidental contamination of the facility and other food.
- If the food must be retained until the distributor can credit the facility, it must be clearly labeled as "NOT FOR SALE".
- Discarded refrigerated food may be stored in a refrigerated location separate from other food and held for credit until recorded by food supplier/distributor.
- The facility should document the type and amount of food, costs and the reason for disposal for insurance and regulatory purposes.
- Small volumes of food to be discarded can be denatured with a cleaning product (such as bleach) and placed in a covered refuse bin outside the facility.
- Large volumes of food should be stored in covered refuse containers in a secure location and disposed of by a refuse disposal company as soon as possible.
- All food waste is to be disposed of in accordance with state and local waste disposal regulations in a licensed landfill.
- Local landfills should be contacted prior to delivery of food from a private individual or carrier to insure acceptance of the waste.