Temporary Water Loss

What to do if you lose water at your food establishment

If there is an emergency resulting in a temporary water loss, think about the following to help decide if it safe to stay open to the public:

- How long will water be unavailable?
- Is an alternative safe water source available?
- Will utensil washing be possible?
- Can the menu be reduced to foods that need very little or no water to prepare?

The "Person-in-Charge" must make sure that the Wisconsin Food Code is followed at all times, and will have to close the business if food can't be served safely.

Please contact the Health Department at 608-242-6515 when a water loss occurs.

May stay open if:

- Water is available from an approved source, like bottled water or potable water stored in clean, covered, food grade bulk containers.
- Enough of water is available during all times of operation, including peak hours, to safely continue food operation activities like utensil washing and hand washing.
- Menu is restricted to items that do not require water or require little water.

Must close if:

- Water supply is used up.
- Clean equipment, utensils and tableware are used up.
- Cleanliness of the physical establishment affects food safety.
- No toilet facilities are available for employee use.

Temporary Water Supply Rules

Utensil Washing – If utensil washing is not available, single service utensils, plates and cups must be used. Using single utensils, plates and cups will also reduce how much water is needed to stay open.

> **Note:** In-use utensils like spatulas, tongs, cutting boards, etc. must be washed and sanitized at least every 4 hours. If dish washing is unavailable and extra utensils are not present to change out at least every 4 hours, food service may be limited to 4 hours.

Water Temperature – Heat water to 110°F for washing of utensils and equipment and 100°F for handwashing. If there is no way to heat the water, full service must stop and only prepackaged foods may be served.

Handwashing – A temporary handwashing station may be set up at hand sinks. Use potable (safe to drink) water in a clean, sanitized container with a free-flow style spigot that can be turned on to let warm water flow over hands into the hand sink. Push button spigots are not allowed. Provide hand soap, paper towels and a post a sign to remind employees to use the temporary handwashing station.

Wet Hand Wipes - If only prepackaged foods are to be sold, wet hand wipes shall be available in place of a temporary handwashing station.

Toilet Facilities - Toilets facilities can be temporarily closed to the public but must be available for employees. Water must be available to pour in the toilets in order to flush them. If employee toilet facilities are not available, the food establishment must be closed.