

Reopening Your Food Facility After a Sewage Back up

Sewage waters may flood your food facility. Sewage waters contain harmful microbes that will contaminate food contact surfaces, making it unsafe to prepare food. It is important that you discard contaminated food, and clean and sanitize your food facility before re-opening.

Discard Damaged Food Products

Discard and remove all food and packaging materials that may have been submerged in sewage water or affected by moisture. This includes:

- open food
- damaged cans
- containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped-caps (soda pop bottles), twist-caps, flip-tops, snap-opens, and similar type closures
- food packed in plastic, paper, cardboard, cloth, and similar containers that have been water damaged or have absorbed moisture

Clean and Sanitize the Facilities

Once the sewage waters and damaged food products have been removed, thoroughly clean and sanitize your facility to remove sewage water deposits and kill harmful microbes.

Chemical sanitizers include:

- 100 – 200 ppm chlorine (for example, bleach)
(about one tablespoon of bleach in one gallon of water)
- 200 ppm quaternary ammonium compound (QUATs)
- other approved sanitizers
- Wash with warm water and detergent, rinse and then sanitize:
 - all floors, walls, and ceilings
 - refrigeration units, if necessary
 - all countertops, sinks, equipment including ice machines and non-food contact surfaces
- Run the empty dishwasher through the wash-rinse-sanitize cycle to flush the water lines, and clean and sanitize the inside of the dishwasher before washing equipment and utensils in it.
- Use a commercial dishwasher or a three-compartment sink to wash, rinse, and sanitize equipment and utensils.

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There may be some damage to structural components like walls, piping, or HVAC systems of the food establishment, depending on the extent of sewage water flooding.

- Mould contamination may be a concern. Walls, piping, ceiling, and HVAC system/ventilation systems affected by sewage waters should be cleaned, repaired, and disinfected, where possible.
- Remove and destroy all absorbent materials, like carpet and drywall that have water damage.
- Dry all remaining structural components as quickly as possible. Do not close up any new construction until after the structural components are dry.

Conduct a Self-Inspection

Conduct a complete self-inspection to ensure that the food facility can be reopened safely.

Determine the cause of the sewage back-up

Determine the cause of the sewage back-up, to reduce the risk of sewage back-ups in the future. Ensure that:

- the grease trap is serviced regularly
- there is a backflow preventer on food facility sewage lines
- staff is not dumping food debris down the drains or into the dishwasher

Contact us at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online](#) at ahs.ca/eph.

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