

How Food Service Managers Handle Emergencies

Food Service Managers have to be prepared for all types of emergencies in addition to handling the everyday management of the operation. The response of food service managers in the case of an emergency is guided by the University of Maryland (UMD) Emergency Operations Plan which identifies the University's emergency planning, organization, and response policies and procedures. Standard Operating Procedures are in place for the temporary meal service for resident students and emergency response workers and for communicating information to resident students, parents, other department units, and all dining service staff.

The first step in dealing with a foodborne illness is prevention through adherence and monitoring of food safety and sanitation. When a food item is received, it is inspected for quality and checked for temperature control. If the food item does not meet pre-existing standards, it is returned to the vendor. If there is a foodborne illness, it is reported and an investigation is conducted to identify the source. Procedures are in place to recall food that is contaminated or suspect for contamination.

If there was a loss of water such as a water main break, the manager would try to contain the leakage to minimize damage or safety hazards and remove any products from the affected area if possible. If it is a significant water leak, areas where water has accumulated would be avoided due to the potential for electric shock. The loss of water would be reported to the Facilities Management Work Control Center. Dining services maintains a three day supply of bottled water at all times. If the hot water was affected, the dishwasher would not be operable and disposable utensils would be used instead of china.

An electrical failure would also be reported to the Facilities Management. Limited electricity may be provided by emergency generators or an emergency lighting source. Everyone except pertinent staff would be evacuated. The evacuation would remain in effect until the power has been restored. If there is an extended, campus wide, or area wide power outage, further instruction and information would be provided through the UM Emergency Text Alert and Early Warning systems.

In the case of a terrorist attack, a campus emergency alert would go out. This campus alert could shut down the campus-preventing entrance into and exit out of the buildings. Dining Services would make every effort to provide food and water during this emergency; however, food may be provided on a limited schedule based on staff and food supply issues. Signs would be placed at each dining hall and satellite area that advises customers of the emergency and the hours for dining service. The managers would follow a 3 or 5 day emergency plan. If necessary, managers would follow procedures and policies to provide food to students who are confined and unable to come to the dining halls.