Dear Food Service Operator,

As you know, an important part of doing business is preparing your establishment for emergency situations. There is always the potential for interruption of services and in order for you to operate during or following a crisis, certain plans have to be in place.

Safe potable water is essential for the operation of a food service operation. According to the Georgia Department of Public Health Rules and Regulations for Food Service Chapter 511-6-1-.03(2) (n) Imminent Health Hazard. If an imminent health hazard exists because of an emergency such as a fire, flood, interruption of electrical or water service for two or more hours, sewage malfunction, misuse of poisonous or toxic materials, onset of an apparent foodborne illness outbreak, gross unsanitary occurrence or condition, or other circumstances that may endanger public health, then operations are immediately discontinued and the Health Authority is notified. However, establishments may continue to operate under an emergency operation plan that has been approved by the Health Authority prior to the occurrence of such emergency events.

I want to underscore that your emergency operation plan must be approved by Environmental Health well before an emergency occurs for you to continue operations during the emergency. One example is a boil water advisory. If a boil water advisory goes into effect and your establishment is in the impacted area and you have not had an emergency operation plan approved by your county Environmental Health office prior to the advisory, then you cannot continue to operate while the advisory is in place.

Please create an emergency operations plan and present it to your county Environmental Health office at your earliest convenience. By working together we can ensure that things go as smoothly as possible if and when unexpected situations arise.

Enclosed please find a brochure created by the Georgia Department of Public Health’s Environmental Health program that specifically addresses water interruption along with some additional guidance documents. You can also find guidance at www.garestaurants.org/emergency-preparedness. We hope that you will find the information helpful. Should you have any questions please don’t hesitate to reach out to your local Environmental Health office.

Serving Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, and McIntosh counties.