

## Mobile Food Unit Plan Review and Permitting Guide

Preparing to open a new or remodeled (mobile change) mobile food unit requires careful planning, then approval of those plans by Public Health – Seattle & King County (Public Health) before you begin to build the unit. Public Health is one of several agencies from which you will need to get a permit before your mobile business can open.

- All the necessary forms that must be completed and submitted online via Public Health Permit Center for review and approval.
- A glossary of word definitions is included in this guide.
- Our contact information is on the next page. Please contact us if you still have questions after reviewing the guide.

### The Plan Review Application Process

Public Health's plan approval process requires you to complete the plans and application online. Getting the permit will be delayed if the application is not complete or the plans for your unit need to be changed. Your completed plan review application must include:

1. Mobile food unit floor plans
2. A Use of Commissary/Shared Kitchen Agreement (online form in Public Portal)
3. A completed Food Preparation Flow Chart (online form in Public Portal)
4. A completed Use of Restroom Agreement (online form in Public Portal)
5. A completed Mobile Food Unit Contact Information for Route or Site Location (online form in Public Portal)
6. A detailed menu
7. The correct plan review fee

All the forms and mobile plan review application must be submitted online via our website: [Public Health Permit Center](#). See instruction at [kingcounty.gov/PublicHealthPermits](http://kingcounty.gov/PublicHealthPermits). Following is the Public Health process after you submitted it online.

1. Public Health permit technicians will screen the application materials to make sure that it is complete.
2. If it is complete, it will be examined carefully by a plan reviewer. Applications are reviewed on a first come first served basis. The plan reviewer will let you know by email whether your plan was approved or not. **If your plans are not approved**, the plan reviewer will let you know exactly what needs to be done to do it correctly.

### **When your plans are approved, you need to apply for your operating permit online:**

1. Your operating permit is required to operate your Mobile Food Unit as a Food Service Establishment.
2. When you have paid for your permits and are ready to open for business, **contact your plan reviewer to schedule a pre-opening inspection**. Our inspectors schedule pre-opening inspections on a first come, first served basis.

### **Additional permits:**

**In addition to the Public Health plan review and permitting requirements, there may be other permits you are required to have before opening for business**

Local building officials may require that you apply for a “land use” permit for the site where you want to do business. Contact the city or jurisdiction where you want to place your mobile unit. For more information about mobile food vending in the **City of Seattle** please contact: the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) Street Use Division(206) 684-5253 or [SDOTPermit@seattle.gov](mailto:SDOTPermit@seattle.gov)

The City of Seattle’s Office of Economic Development also offers permitting guidance for food service operators. See <https://www.seattle.gov/economic-development/start-a-business/food-business-handbook/mobile-food-vending> or call 206-684-8090 . Fire Department approval and permit is required if you will be using liquid propane, charcoal, wood or oil frying equipment. Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L & I) requires a sticker for occupied vehicles (commercial coaches) Business licenses are required (state and local jurisdiction)

### **Glossary of Mobile Food Unit Terminology**

“**Cart**” means a Mobile Food Unit that can be pushed by a single person to move between locations..

“**Commissary**” is an approved food establishment where food is stored, prepared, put into portions or packaged to be served somewhere else.

“**Limited Food Service**” means a food establishment with a limited menu (risk 1) in a building without permanent plumbing and requires a Variance.

“**Menu**” means the types of foods that will be served and how they are prepared.

“**Mobile Food Unit**” – means a food service that can be easily moved from one location to another, such as a cart, trailer, or truck.

“**Occupied Mobile Food Unit**” means a Mobile Food Unit where the workers will be inside of the unit, such as an enclosed truck or trailer.

“**Plan Review**” is the careful review of the proposed mobile food unit design, equipment, and menu by the health department to assure food items will be safely stored, prepared and served before the operating permit is granted. Reviewers will assure the mobile food unit is designed for food safety and that there is access to an approved commissary and bathroom. This guideline will help you prepare everything that you need to submit for a successful plan review.

Plan review may be required when changes are made to an existing mobile food unit, for example changes in ownership, commissary location, menu or physical design.

“**Unoccupied Mobile Food Unit**” means a Mobile Food Unit where the workers will be outside of the unit, such as a push cart or trailer.

## Mobile food unit Plan application checklist

The following checklist will help you organize the necessary and **complete** set of plans for public health review. **Everything** on this list is required for the plan reviewer to accept the plans and begin the review process. Plans that are incomplete will not be accepted for review.

### ➤ 1. Mobile Food Unit Design Information

- Outside View:** Provide plans/drawings/photos of the mobile food unit. Include front, back and side views.
- Occupied Mobile Food Unit:** Provide scale drawings that include dimensions (*length, width*), of the interior showing all food service equipment locations (*hand wash sink, commercial refrigerator, cash register, soap & paper towel dispenser, three compartment sink, grill, oven, baked goods display, etc.*) Show all views including front, side, and elevations. State what the mobile surfaces, inside and out, are made of. Include the make and model number for each piece of equipment that will be installed. If the unit is already built, provide photographs of the inside, outside, all equipment, and the L & I sticker.



- Unoccupied Mobile Food Unit Layout:** Provide length, width and height, of the trailer or cart layout showing all food service equipment locations (*espresso machine, knock box, grinder, blender, hand wash sink, commercial refrigerator, cash register, soap & paper towel dispenser, hot dog cooker, condiment dispensers, grill, oven, baked goods display, etc.*)

**Note Movable Sidewalk Cart Size Restrictions:** The cart body size is limited to 3 feet by 6 feet and two (2) wing extensions not longer than 18 inches each. Local jurisdictions may require the cart dimensions to be smaller. Please check cart size restrictions with the jurisdiction where you want to sell your product before giving your plans to public health.



➤ **2. Water System**

- Provide detailed drawings of the water system showing the placement/location of all parts, including: fresh and waste water tanks, hot water heater, pump, tubing, waste connection, three compartment sink (if applicable) and hand wash sink
- Hand wash sink must have hot and cold or warm (100 - 120° Fahrenheit) running water under pressure, be easily accessible and large enough for food employees to wash both hands simultaneously, approximately 10 x 10 x 6 inches. The hand wash sink is required to have at least five (5) gallons of fresh water.
- Hot water heater must have an adjustable thermostat and hot water temperature for the hand wash sink at 100° Fahrenheit (F) or more.
- Fresh water tank and all tubing material must be Food-Grade approved. Fresh water tanks must be filled with water from an approved source. If water tanks are refilled by hoses, the hoses must be food grade. All hoses must have vacuum breakers to prevent contamination of the water supply.
- If the mobile has a three compartment sink the fresh water tank must be sized to meet the cleaning needs of the truck in addition to the 5 gallons required for hand washing.
- Waste water tank must hold at least fifteen (15) percent more than the freshwater tank.
- Waste connection: The connection to the waste water tank must be easy to connect/disconnect or permanent and must not leak.

*The waste water tank must be emptied or drained at the commissary, or an approved disposal site, **NEVER** on the street or ground or used to water plants. If RV dump sites are used for wastewater holding tank disposal, you must attach the facility site address and a letter of permission to your application packet.*

- A 3-compartment dishwashing sink is required on all Occupied Mobile Food Units. The dishwashing sink must have space on both sides for dishes and be supplied with hot and cold running water under pressure.
- If seating is provided a plumbed restroom must be available for customers within 500 feet of your unit.

➤ **3. Commissary Information**

- Commissary Name:** Include the address, phone number(s) and name of the contact person.
- Commissary Agreement:** Complete the “Use of Commissary Agreement” online form.



- Commissary Plan:** Provide a plan drawing of the commissary layout showing which food service equipment, plumbing fixtures and storage areas you will be using. If the mobile food unit is to be stored there, then show where it will be placed on the drawings.

#### **4. Site/Itinerary Information Contact Information**

Provide a completed “*Mobile Food Unit Contact Information for Route or Site Location*” online form.

#### ➤ **5. Menu & Food Preparation Steps**

**Itemized Menu:** Provide a detailed list of all the foods and beverages you will be serving and note where you purchase your food supplies of any item that you have not made. Include all items like entrees, condiments, baked goods, iced drinks, syrups, etc. Note how the items are handled, packaged and/or displayed.

**Food Preparation:** Document all food preparation procedures. Include all steps in the preparation of each menu item noting whether the preparation occurs at the commissary or on the mobile food unit. Describe in detail how the food is prepared, when it is made, how it is packaged, how it is transported (hot/cold), etc. Fill out **the online food flow chart** to help summarize all the food processes that you will be using.

**Menu Change: Include on the plans the following statement:**

**“NO CHANGES WILL BE MADE WITHOUT PUBLIC HEALTH – SEATTLE & KING COUNTY APPROVAL”**

- Operating Site** – If the mobile food unit will be operating at only one site, indicate exactly where the mobile food unit will be located, including the address and a site map/drawing showing the mobile food unit in relation to the streets, buildings, restroom and commissary (if your commissary is within 500 feet). **and/or**

**Multiple Sites** – If the mobile food unit will be operating at multiple sites or on a route, provide your contact information and other ways in which we can determine your location of operation; such as cell phone number, email address, web page with a posted calendar, twitter account, or GPS locator.

- Restroom Location(s):** Provide a completed “*Use of Restroom Agreement*” online form and a map showing the location of the restroom in relation to the Mobile Food Unit if at any one location for more than one hour. A completed “*Use of Restroom Agreement*” must be kept on the mobile food unit for review at time of inspection.

Please note that your mobile food business may be closed and you may incur penalty fees if changes are made to the mobile food unit, menu, food preparation procedures, or commissary without first obtaining written approval.

#### ➤ **6. Mobile Operational Questionnaire (online)**

- Hours of Operation:** List the mobile food unit business hours and the preparation time(s) at the commissary.
- Tank Maintenance:** Describe how and where fresh and waste water tanks will be filled, emptied or cleaned.
- Setup & Takedown:** give an outline of your daily activities, to include preloading of the mobile food unit, transport to the site location, setup on site, closing procedures, storage of supplies, etc. Be specific. State the exact procedures that will be used at each sink (i.e. 3 compartment sink, mop sink.), in the commissary preparation of foods, for hand washing, etc.
- Cleaning Schedule:** Provide the cleaning and sanitizing procedures you will use on the mobile food unit during business hours. Describe the cleaning procedures at the commissary.

## General Requirements for Mobile Food Units:

- Food preparation (including, but not limited to, cutting, chopping, slicing or similar food preparation activity) will not be allowed on the mobile unit and must occur at the commissary.
- Grilling or otherwise reheating for hot holding is only allowed for potentially hazardous foods that have been processed in a facility under Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or US Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspection or foods that are cooked and cooled in the licensed commissary. Equipment for reheating must rapidly reheat within one (1) hour. Hot holding of reheated foods is not recommended. Reheating “to order” is a safer method and may be required.
- Commercial-grade mechanical refrigeration** is required for all potentially hazardous foods. Cold potentially hazardous foods must be held less than 41° F. Thermometers must be visible in all refrigeration units. Pre-chilling the refrigeration units prior to loading is required.
- Facilities for hot holding must maintain 135° F or above. Mechanical units are required, either powered by propane, electricity or generators. Preheating the hot units prior to loading is required.
- All hot held potentially hazardous foods must be served the same day. **Cooling and reuse of leftover hot food is not allowed.**
- All foods must be protected from contamination, e.g. a sneeze guard or dome shields.
- Condiments must be in single service packages or dispenser bottles. Condiments not available in single service packaging and which can't be dispensed in bottles may be served in bulk provided that the condiment is non-potentially hazardous and there is a sneeze guard for food protection, e.g., sauerkraut.
- All food, equipment, utensils, paper products, water tanks and cleaning supplies must be stored on the mobile food unit or in the commissary; no additional tables, storage or cooking equipment (smoker, barbeque) is allowed off the frame of the mobile food unit. A waste container must be provided for waste generated by the mobile food unit operation.
- Mobile food units must maintain their mobility and return to the commissary on a daily basis for storage and cleaning as necessary. An alternative servicing support operation may be allowed but written procedures must be approved in advance by Public Health.
- A copy of the approved plans must be kept with the Mobile Food Unit and be available for the inspector.

### **Specific Requirements for Enclosed Mobile Food Units:**

- Cooking of raw meats is restricted to thin foods, such as, hamburger patties. Cooking of raw meats greater than one (1) inch in thickness is not allowed.
- Ventilation hoods are required for any grease producing cooking equipment. If deep fryers are utilized, a tight fitting, heat resistant cover shall be locked in place for safe transport of hot grease.
- Occupied Mobile Food Units:** All occupied vehicles (commercial coaches) must obtain approval from Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). L&I rules and regulations govern the safety of body and frame design and the installation of plumbing, heating and electrical equipment. Contact the L&I Factory Assembled Structures Program at 800-705-1411 or the L&I [Food Truck Website](#) for your packet of information on L&I plan review. Obtain L&I inspection and seal of approval prior to your plan review by the Health Department (black label affixed to the outside of the vehicle).

THE STATE OF WASHINGTON			
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES			
INSPECTED AND APPROVED TO THE RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR CONVERSION VENDOR UNIT OR SELF-PROPELLED MEDICAL UNITS, RCW 43.22.340. UNITS BEARING A DEPARTMENT INSIGNIA SHALL NOT HAVE IT'S PLUMBING, MECHANICAL OR ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT AND INSTALLATIONS ALTERED UNLESS APPROVAL IS FIRST OBTAINED FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES. SELLER/CONVERTOR CERTIFIES TO COMPLIANCE OF UNIT.			
VENDOR NO.	P. A.	D	
MSN		DSN	
ELECTRICAL SERVICE LOAD	PLUMBING FIXTURES	HEATING AND/OR COOLING	
		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	

### **Specific Requirements for Non-Enclosed Mobile Food Units:**

- Juice extractors are not allowed because of the difficulty of cleaning them during operation.
- Raw proteins (beef, pork, poultry, seafood, etc.) are not allowed on the Mobile Food Unit.
- All hot held food items must be discarded at the end of the day. no cooling of these items will be allowed.**
- The number of menu items may be restricted due to mobile food unit size limitations.
- One ice chest is allowed for storage of non-potentially hazardous beverages.
- Reusable utensils (i.e., tongs, spoons, etc.) must be washed and sanitized at the commissary. If the commissary is not convenient to carry out constant ware washing, then extra clean and sanitized utensils must be loaded on the cart in a sanitary container and soiled utensils must be replaced. Store dirty utensils in a separate container for washing and sanitizing at the commissary.

### **Specific Requirements for Mobile Food Units Serving Only Prepackaged Foods:**

- All preparation and packaging must be done at the commissary or another permitted commercial establishment.
  - Commercial-grade mechanical refrigeration is preferred and may be required depending on menu (i.e., hazardous foods and length of business day). Re-freezable or dry ice may be utilized in an ice chest, the inside and outside must be smooth, cleanable and durable. (Styrofoam ice chests are not approved).
  - No utensils are needed for prepackaged foods. The operator cannot open packages or handle unwrapped food. Only the customer can open the package.
  - Prepackaged food must be properly labeled with the common name of the food; the label must contain a list of ingredients beginning with the most and ending with the least by weight, including all artificial color(s), flavor(s) and chemical preservatives the food contains; The label must also contain an accurate statement of the quantity of the packaged food, and the name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor.
  - Additional requirements for vehicles that stop at office buildings and sell prepackaged foods on multiple floors:
    - a) Commercial-grade mechanical refrigeration is preferred and may be required in the vehicle. Re-freezable ice packs may be utilized for multiple floor sales (no regular ice).
    - b) Hot holding is not permitted.
    - c) Condiments must be prepackaged single servings.
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- Similar process for Limited Food Service (not mobile) - Facility with a limited menu (risk 1 only) in a building without permanent plumbing and requires a Variance:** Provide detailed layout showing all food service equipment locations (*espresso machine, knock box, grinder, hot dog cooker, hand wash sink, commercial refrigerator, cash register, soap and paper towel dispensers, condiment dispensers, etc.*)

### **Specific Requirements for Limited Food Service:**

- Commissary must be located within 200 feet of the Limited Food Service.
- Menu is limited to non-potentially hazardous foods, hot dogs, and espresso drinks.
- Juice extractors are not allowed because of the difficulty of cleaning them during operation.
- One ice chest is allowed for storage of non-potentially hazardous beverages.
- Reusable utensils (i.e., tongs, spoons, steamer pitchers, etc.) must be washed and sanitized at the commissary.