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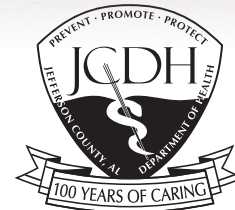
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Basic Guidelines to Operate a **MOBILE FOOD ESTABLISHMENT**



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SUMMARY REQUIREMENTS: COMMISSARY

- Food Establishment to which mobile unit reports daily for servicing.
- Plan review required for commissary (separate from mobile unit).
- Commissary must be permitted and approved.
- Commissary permit holder must ensure mobile unit's compliance with plan of operation.
- All food and other items used for the mobile unit must be stored at the commissary.
- Must meet all Food Service Establishment structural requirements for commissaries.
- If mobile unit is a pushcart, an enclosed, protected storage area for the pushcart must be provided.
- No outdoor cooking is allowed.
- If unpackaged foods are handled, the commissary must have a servicing area with a concrete or asphalt surface for supplying and cleaning the mobile unit, and over-head protection covering the following:
 - Location for loading/unloading of food/supplies,
 - Drinking water servicing location, and
 - Facilities to drain and flush the waste water retention tank- minimum of hot water and drain to sanitary waste system (sanitary sewer or onsite septic system). These facilities must be separated from the potable water & food supply area.

A critical element in starting a business is creating a business plan. Generally, the goal of a food business is delivering a product (food) to a consumer. Therefore, a primary piece of a food business plan is determining what foods are going to be prepared, how they are going to be prepared, and what equipment and facilities will be needed to prepare them. The health department's role is to ensure the highest possible level of food safety for the consumer; initially this is done by approval of the plan to produce this food.

The first step in obtaining approval is to submit the plans to the health department for review and approval, and then to begin to outfit a facility for food production based on the approved plans. The review is not a pass/fail endeavor. During the review process, there may be requests for more information and requirements for modifications. This is much more fiscally & time efficient to be done on paper, and not during or after construction.

The information presented in this booklet is intended to *provide guidance for planning a mobile food service unit*. These guidelines are based on the Rules of Alabama State Board of Health Bureau of Environmental Services, Chapter 420-3-22, for Food Establishment Sanitation, and are not all inclusive. The standard for approval is measured by compliance with the regulations; additional requirements may be warranted depending on the specific mobile food operation.

DEFINITIONS

Commissary

A permitted food establishment to which a mobile food unit returns DAILY for such things as discarding liquid or solid wastes; refilling water tanks and ice bins; storage of utensils, food, and single-service items; and for loading food.

Mobile Food Establishment

A unit mounted on or pulled by a motor vehicle.

It must be self-contained with its own potable (drinkable) water supply and waste water tank, unless handling only pre-packaged foods. It is designed to be readily movable and must return to its commissary daily.

Pushcart

A pushcart is a type of mobile unit designed to be moved by only one person. A pushcart can be used to prepare and serve only:

- Non-potentially hazardous foods such as popcorn, lemonade, and flavored ice;
- Foods pre-wrapped at the commissary and maintained at the proper temperature (< 41° F or > 140° F); and
- Foods that may be served in a Limited Food Service Establishment. Pushcarts must have overhead protection to cover the food area or the cart.

SUMMARY REQUIREMENTS: MOBILE UNIT

- Two main types:
 - self-propelled (i.e., truck, van, or trailer)
 - pushcart
- Plan review required for mobile unit and commissary
- Commissary is **REQUIRED** as a base of operation.
- May operate **ONLY** in the county in which it holds a permit, unless prior approval is obtained from another county Health Department.
- All food and supplies must be stored on the unit during operation.
- Must meet all Food Service Establishment structural requirements for mobile units.
- No outdoor cooking is allowed.
- The following are **REQUIRED**:
 - Adequate refrigeration,
 - approved equipment,
 - mechanical ventilation over cooking equipment that produces grease or steam.
- If unpackaged foods are handled on the mobile unit, it must have:
 - handsink with hot and cold running water, soap, and paper towels;
 - potable water holding tank and water heater of sufficient size; and
 - waste water holding tank at least 15% larger than supply tank.

MOBILE UNIT SERVICING AREA AT COMMISSARY

A mobile food unit servicing area must be provided and should include overhead protection for any supplying, cleaning or servicing operations. This servicing area will not be required where only packaged food is placed on the mobile food unit or pushcart or where mobile food units do not contain water tanks or waste water retention tanks. A drawing of the servicing area should be submitted with the plans for review.

Within this servicing area, there must be a mop service basin with hot and cold water under pressure provided for the flushing and drainage of liquid wastes. This area must be separate from the location provided for potable (drinkable) water servicing and for the loading and unloading of food and related supplies.

The surface of the servicing area must be constructed of a smooth, nonabsorbent material, such as concrete or machine-laid asphalt, and must be maintained in good repair, kept clean, and graded to drain.

What Else Should I Know?

- All codes must be satisfied before final approval can be given.
- Before a mobile unit changes to a different commissary, the owner must notify the Health Department and apply for a new permit.
- Plan Review fee is \$150-\$350 (dependent on menu). Fee is due when plans are submitted.
- Copies of the Rules and Regulations may be obtained (\$5.00 per copy) at the health department; also available online jcdh.org for download.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MOBILE UNITS

All mobile units must have appropriate facilities for the specific type of food operation conducted on the mobile unit or pushcart.

Sinks

Handwashing facilities must be provided on mobile food units or push-carts where any food is prepared or unpackaged foods are handled. This facility must include a hand sink, soap and paper towels in dispensers, and a reliable, adequate supply of hot and cold water dispensed through a mixing valve faucet. Handwashing sinks must be located to be accessible and unobstructed for use by the operator. Gloves may not be allowed as a substitute for a hand washing facility. A two compartment sink is required to serve unpackaged foods. A three-compartment sink on the unit is required when cooking raw potentially hazardous foods.

Water

A potable (drinkable) water holding tank must be installed on the unit. The system must furnish at least 5 gallons of hot and cold water under pressure for handwashing. Additional hot and cold water must be provided if necessary for food preparation and utensil washing. The water inlet must be located so that it will not be contaminated by waste discharge, dust, oil, or grease. It must be kept capped unless being filled. The water inlet must be fitted with a connection that will prevent its use for any other service, and all connecting hoses must be food grade. Tank inlet must be 3/4" internal diameter or less.

Facilities to heat water must be on the mobile food unit. The water heater must provide enough warm water (more than 100° F) for hand-washing at all times and to fill the utensil washing sink on the unit.

Waste Water Retention

A wastewater holding tank that has at least 15% larger capacity than the water supply tank and water heater must be installed on the unit. Liquid waste must be discharged into an approved disposal facility at the commissary. Connections on the unit for servicing the waste disposal facilities must be of a different size or type from those used for supplying potable water to the mobile food unit. The waste connection must be lower than the water inlet connection to prevent contamination of the potable water system.

Garbage Containers

Garbage containers with tight fitting lids must be provided.

Refrigeration

Commercial refrigeration facilities must be provided to maintain potentially hazardous foods at the required temperature (<41°F) during storage.

Equipment

All equipment must have durable, corrosion-resistant, non-absorbent, smooth, and easily cleanable surfaces. Equipment must be clean, in good repair, of approved design, and properly installed to meet all fire, safety, and food codes.

Mobile food units or pushcarts must provide only single-service articles that are individually wrapped or in sanitary containers or approved dispensers for use by the consumer.

Light

50 foot-candles of lighting must be provided in all food preparation areas, on equipment, and in ware washing areas. All light fixtures must be shielded or shatterproof.

RESPONSIBILITY OF COMMISSARY PERMIT HOLDER

It is the responsibility of the commissary permit holder to comply with the provisions of the approved plan of operations. Failure to comply with the provisions of the plan of operations, including preventing critical item violations on the mobile food unit, will be noted on the commissary inspection report and may be grounds for suspension or revocation of the commissary food permit and the authorization to operate a mobile food establishment.

An area at the commissary that is fully covered and protected from environmental contamination, including the entry of insects, rodents, or other pests, must be reserved for the storage of pushcarts.

The commissary owner must make the mobile food units or pushcarts available for inspection at any reasonable time requested by the Health Officer or representative. If a mobile unit or pushcart cannot be presented for inspection at the commissary, the commissary's permit will be suspended.

The owner/operator of the mobile food unit must obtain written permission to use the facilities of the commissary. A mobile food unit commissary voucher must be filled out and signed by the owner of the commissary and witnessed by the Environmental Health Specialist when the permit is issued.

PLAN REVIEW: COMMISSARY

Mobile food units or pushcarts must operate from a commissary and must report at least daily to such location for all supplies and for all cleaning and servicing operations

The commissary must provide enough storage space (dry, refrigeration, and freezer) and garbage facilities to meet the needs of both the mobile and stationary facilities. A drawing of the storage area should be submitted with the plans for review.

The commissary or other fixed food service establishment used as a base of operation for mobile food units or pushcarts must be constructed and operated in compliance with these rules, and must include at minimum:

- Employee toilet facilities;
- Handwashing sink;
- Warewashing sink; and
- Servicing area.

An existing food establishment proposing to convert to a commissary for a mobile food establishment must furnish plans for review and approval showing compliance with the requirements of these rules:

- For a servicing area as specified in that section;
- The proposed storage area for foods and other supplies; and,
- If the mobile unit is a pushcart, the covered and protected storage area reserved for the pushcart.

Floors, Walls and Ceilings

The floors, walls and ceilings must be smooth, easily cleanable, nonabsorbent and in good repair. The juncture between such floors and adjoining walls must not have a seam more than 1/32 inch.

Ventilation

Ventilation hoods must be provided over grills, fryers and any cooking equipment which may produce grease or steam. The ventilation system must be designed to be balanced by a filtered mechanical source of outside air sufficient to produce a slightly positive to neutral pressure in the mobile unit as shown by an air test and balance report. Plans must include provisions for that outside air. Fire extinguishing systems, ventilation hood systems and other ventilation systems must be installed and operated according to local fire code.

Openings to the Outside

All outside openings (such as exterior doors, pass-through windows, etc.) must be protected against the entry of insects by tight-fitting, self-closing doors, closed windows, screening, fly fans, or other means.

Restricted Operation

A mobile food unit must be approved by the Health Officer to operate within EACH county before operating within that county. Authorization to operate in one county does NOT confer authorization to operate in any other county. It is the responsibility of the mobile food establishment operator and the commissary permit holder to obtain proper approval and authorization to operate within each county.

During operation, all food must be conveyed, held, stored, displayed, and served from the mobile food unit.

All foods, single-service articles, and other items used for the operation of the mobile food unit must be stored at the approved commissary except during operation on the mobile food unit. All unpackaged potentially hazardous foods, or those in packages or containers that have been opened, must be discarded at the end of each day.

When facilities for cleaning utensils exist at the commissary, water and waste water systems are not necessary if mobile food units are serving only:

- Food pre-packaged in individual servings and transported and stored under the required conditions; and/or
- Non-potentially hazardous beverages that are dispensed from covered dispensers, or other protected equipment, and ice is not scooped.

Identification

Clearly visible identification is required on 2 sides of the mobile unit:

- Commissary name (letters 3" high)
- Commissary address (letters 1" high)
- Commissary phone number (numbers 1" high)
- All lettering and numbers should be at least 3/8" in width.

Food Preparation

Provide a list of proposed foods to be sold or served (menu), and handling or processing steps for those foods.

All foods sold from the mobile unit must be from a permitted facility. NO foods can be stored or prepared in a private home, or in any non-permitted facility. Foods must come from sources that comply with all laws relating to food and food labeling.

*****No cooking outside of the approved cooking trailer is allowed.***

PLAN REVIEW: MOBILE UNIT

Submit plans for review including type, model, and capacity of the water heater; and a menu. A drawing showing the location of the mobile unit's food preparation equipment, water supply tank, waste water tank, hand washing facility, utensil washing facility, food storage compartments and any other information requested by the Health Officer must be provided in conjunction with the commissary plan review.

If the mobile food establishment will be at a location for two hours or more, the plan of operations must provide for toilet facilities for the operator. These toilet facilities must:

- Be in a permanent building that is not a private residence;
- Be readily available for use by the mobile food unit operator;
- Be within approximately 200 feet of the mobile food unit's location;
- Meet the requirements of these rules for food establishment toilet rooms except for ventilation and ceiling construction.

A plan of operations must be filed with the Health Officer stating the proposed menu and methods of complying with the requirements of these rules for temperature control, hand washing, and servicing at the commissary. The plan of operations must specify if the mobile food establishment is proposed to:

- Be at any one sales location for more than two hours;
- Be at any sales location that is more than two hours travel time from the commissary;
- Operate in a county other than where the commissary is located.