

# **Elmore County Health Department**

## **Mobile Food Guidelines**

### **Definitions**

#### **Commissary**

A permitted food establishment to which a mobile unit returns on a daily basis for such tasks as discarding liquid and/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 prepackaged 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, hot dogs and hard dip ice cream;
- Foods pre-wrapped at the commissary and maintained at the proper temperature (45° F or below for cold foods and 135° or above for hot foods);

Pushcarts must have overhead protection (i.e. umbrella) to cover the food area or cart.

### **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 the mobile food units or pushcarts where any food is prepared or unpackaged food is handled. This facility must include a separate handsink, soap and paper towels in dispensers, a handwashing sign 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 handwashing facilities. 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" in diameter or less.

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

**Garbage Containers**

Garbage containers with tight fitting lids must be provided.

A wastewater holding tank that is 15% larger in capacity than the water supply tank must be installed on the unit. Liquid waste must be discharged into an approved disposal facility (i.e. mop sink, can wash) 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 unit. The waste connection must be lower than the water inlet connection to prevent contamination of the potable water system. The commissary must have appropriate grease trap facilities if the mobile unit's operation involves the creation of grease-laden waste (frying, etc.)

**Refrigeration**

Refrigeration facilities must be provided to maintain potentially hazardous foods at the required temperature (45°F or less) 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 an 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**

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

**Floors, Walls and Ceilings**

The floors, walls and ceilings must be smooth, easily cleanable, nonabsorbent and in good repair. An approved cove base must cover the juncture between the wall and the floor.

### **Ventilation**

Ventilation hoods must be provided over grills, fryers and any cooking equipment which may produce grease or steam. Such hoods and devices must be designed to prevent grease or condensation from collecting on the walls and ceilings and from dripping on food contact surfaces. Fire extinguishing systems, ventilation hood systems and other ventilation systems must be installed and operated according to local fire and mechanical codes.

### **Outside Openings**

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 normal business operation when it is 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:

1. Food pre-packaged in individual servings and transported and stored under the required conditions; and/or
2. 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 or pushcart:

1. Commissary name (3 inches high)
2. Commissary address (1 inch high)
3. Commissary phone number (1 inch high)

Lettering and numbers should be at least 3/8 of an inch wide.

## **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 facility not permitted by the local health department. Foods must come from sources that comply with all laws relating to food and food labeling.

## **Mobile Unit Plan Review**

All plans turned in for review must include the following: A drawing showing the location of the mobile unit's water supply tank, waste water tank and capacity, hand washing facility, utensil washing facility, water heater, food storage compartments and any other information requested by the Health Officer must be provided in conjunction with the commissary plan review. For more information on required documents, see Documents Required for Food and Lodging Plan Review.

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 to:

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

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:

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

## **Commissary Plan Review**

Mobile food units or pushcarts must operate from a commissary permitted by the health department 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) garbage facilities, and grease waste 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.

## **Responsibility of the Commissary Permit Holder**

It is the responsibility of the commissary permit holder to comply with the provisions of the approval 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. See Consent for Use of Permitted Establishment as a Commissary Document.

## **Mobile Food 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 prepackaged food is placed on the mobile food unit or pushcart or where mobile food units do not contain water tanks or waste 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 resubmit all necessary information. Plan Review fee is \$80. Fee is due when plans are submitted.
- Submit Application for Food and Lodging Plan Review.
- If you need further information contact:

Elmore County Health Department  
Environmental Health Division  
6501 US Highway 231  
Wetumpka, AL 36092  
334-567-1171