

Mobile Food Service Operation



Questions and Answers

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Mobile Food Service Operations

What is a mobile food service operation or a mobile retail food establishment?

A Mobile food service operation is a food service operation that is operated from a movable vehicle, a portable structure, or a watercraft, and that routinely changes location. If the operation remains at any one location for more than forty consecutive days, the operation is no longer a mobile food service operation. Moving it a few feet or pulling it around the block and returning to the same location does not count. Routinely means regularly, in this context. These normally serve a portion of food or a meal.

A mobile retail food establishment means a retail food establishment that is operated from a movable vehicle or other portable structure, and that routinely changes location, except that if the establishment operates from any one location for more than forty consecutive days, the establishment is no longer a mobile retail food establishment. Examples would be a popcorn stand, an elephant ear stand, or a candy stand.

For our purposes, both mobile food services and mobile food establishment will go by the term, “mobile food service operation” in this document and must conform to the same requirements.

How are mobile food service operations licenses obtained?

The operator of a mobile food service operation shall make application for a license to the board of health of the health district in which the operator's business headquarters are located. The operator of a mobile food service operation whose business address is located outside of Ohio shall make application for a license to the board of health having jurisdiction over the operator's first Ohio location in any one licensing year. A food service license issued to an operator of a mobile food service operation by an approved health district, as provided in Chapter 3717 of the Revised Code, shall be recognized by all other licensors in this state.

Temporary food service licenses will only be issued for a mobile food service operation if proof can be shown that the event the license is issued for is truly a temporary situation. Examples would be rental of a trailer by the Boy Scouts to serve beverages at a local festival. Mobile food service operations from other Ohio counties will be expected to have a mobile food service license from that county when they come to Shelby County.

Are plans required to be reviewed prior to issuing a license?

Yes, plans showing the layout of the interior, a list of equipment makes and model numbers, surfaces of floors, walls and ceilings, lighting, water supply and waste water tanks and a menu must be submitted. All equipment must be commercial equipment certified by an independent testing agency, such as NSF CTL, or UL. This helps the health department determine that all necessary equipment is available for the proposed food service to operate. The health department must post on the back of the food service

operation license pertinent information concerning the operation. This information includes the menu, the layout of the operation including the location and type of major equipment, and any restrictions or conditions limiting the types of food that may be prepared or served by the license holder based on the equipment or facilities.

What items are required to be placed on the back of the mobile food service operation license?

The menu, the layout of the operation including the location and type of major equipment, and any restrictions or conditions limiting the types of food that may be prepared or served by the license holder based on the equipment or facilities are required to be placed on the back of each license.

What information is required to be placed on the mobile?

The name of the operation, the city of origin, and the area code and telephone number of the business must be conspicuously displayed on the exterior of the mobile unit. The name and city of origin must be displayed with individual lettering at least three inches high and one inch wide.

When are inspections required and what items are subject to inspection?

One complete standard inspection must be completed by the licensing health department before the operation's first event. The license will then be issued.

Any equipment used in the operation of the mobile food service is to be inspected and be in compliance with the law and rules at all times when in operation. This includes support vehicles, such as refrigeration trucks, supply trucks, etc.

Whenever an inspection is conducted by a health district other than the licensing district, a copy of the inspection report must be sent to that licensing health district.

Can mobile licenses be revoke or suspended?

Yes, if a violation presents a clear and immediate danger to the public health, the license may be suspended without giving written notice or the opportunity to make corrections. The licensor that issued the license the license or the licensor for the health district in which the operation is being operated may suspend the license.

When a license is suspended, the licensor that suspended the license shall hold the license until the suspension is lifted and the licensor receives written notice of the next location at which the licensee proposes to operate the food service operation.

Revoking a mobile food service operation license can only be accomplished by the health district issuing the license.

An appeal on a suspension or a revocation must be made to the licensor that suspended or revoked the license.

What types of food may be served?

Any food may be served as long as all of the equipment on the floor plan and menu are consistent with the information on the back of the license.

Bulk food containers of food, if not in the original container and if not easily identified, must be properly labeled by the common name.

How are foods required to be protected (temperature requirements)?

All potentially hazardous foods are to be maintained at an internal temperature of 41°F or below or at an internal temperature of 135°F or above during storage, display and transportation.

All potentially hazardous foods requiring cooking shall be cooked to heat all parts of the food to a temperature of at least 145°F (63°C) or above for at least fifteen seconds, **except:**

- Exotic meats raw poultry and poultry products, stuffed fish or meats and stuffing containing meat, poultry or fish must be cooked to heat all parts to at least 165°F (7.2°C) or higher for at least fifteen seconds without interruption or the cooking process;
- Comminuted (ground) fish and meats, injected meats, and unpasteurized eggs shall be cooked to heat all parts to at least 158°F (70°C) for at least one second or 155°F (68.3°C) for at least one minute;
- Roasts of beef, pork roasts, or corned beef shall be cooked in an oven that is preheated to the required temperature and held for the required time as specified in the table located in Section 3717-1-03.3 (A) (2) of the Ohio Administrative Code (the Ohio Retail Food Safety Code).
- Raw, rare, or undercooked potentially hazardous foods may be served if so ordered by the consumer. A consumer advisory, as outlined in Section 3717-1-03.5 (D), will be required.
- Potentially hazardous foods cooked in a microwave oven shall be rotated or stirred midway through the cooking process to compensate for uneven distribution of heat, covered to retain surface moisture, heated to 165°F and allowed to stand for two minutes.

What are the requirements for reheating at a mobile food service operation?

This will vary with the type of operation. Some operations will need both hot and cold holding facilities. If the operation is serving potentially hazardous foods, it must at least have refrigeration facilities, or effectively insulated facilities to assure proper

maintenance of temperatures. Each refrigerated facility must be provided with a numerically scaled thermometer (or recording thermometer), accurate to plus or minus 3°F (1.5°C), located to measure the air temperature in the warmest part of the facility and located to be easily readable.

If potentially hazardous foods are to be held hot, then adequate hot holding facilities will be required. The number of the hot holding facilities will be determined by the size and scope of the operation. Hot holding equipment used for potentially hazardous food shall be designed to include and shall be equipped with at least one integral or permanently affixed temperature measuring device that is located to allow easy viewing of the device's temperature display. This requirement does not apply to equipment for which the placement of a temperature measuring device is not a practical means for measuring the ambient air temperature surrounding the food because of the design, type, and use of the equipment, such as calrod units, heat lamps, cold plates, Bain maries, steam tables, insulated food transport containers, and salad bars. All temperature measuring devices shall be designed to be easily readable.

A metal stem-type, numerically scaled product thermometer, accurate to plus or minus 2°F (1°C), shall be provided and used to assure proper cooking, holding or refrigeration temperatures. A temperature measuring device with a suitable small-diameter probe that is designed to measure the temperature of thin masses (a thermocouple thermometer) shall be provided and readily accessible to accurately measure the temperature in thin foods such as meat patties and fish filets, if these are served.

What is the proper way to thaw foods?

There are only **four** acceptable ways to thaw potentially hazardous foods:

1. In the refrigerator at a temperature not exceed 41°F (5°C)
2. Under cold, running drinking water with sufficient velocity to agitate and float loose particles into the overflow.
3. In a microwave, if the food will be cooked immediately after thawing.
4. In the cooking process itself, such as a frozen meat patty

What foods can be re-served by a mobile food service operation?

After being served or sold and in the possession of a consumer, food that is unused or returned by the consumer may not be offered as food for human consumption; except a container of food that is not potentially hazardous may be transferred from one consumer to another if:

- (1) The food is dispensed so that it is protected from contamination and the container is closed between uses, such as a narrow-neck bottle containing catsup, steak sauce, or wine; or
- (2) The food, such as crackers, salt, or pepper, is in an unopened original package and is maintained in sound condition.

How are foods to be protected in a mobile food service operation?

All foods must be protected at all times, including while being stored, prepared, displayed, or transported, from potential contamination, including dust, insects, rodents, unclean equipment and utensils, unnecessary handling, coughs and sneezes, hair, overhead leakage or dripping from condensation.

Foods, raw and prepared, if removed from the original container must be stored in a clean, covered, approved container.

Raw animal foods must be stored in a manner that will not lead to cross contamination of ready-to-eat foods.

Raw animal foods must also not be stored in a manner that will allow foods that require a higher cooking temperature to contaminate foods that require lower cooking temperatures.

All equipment, surfaces, and utensils must be clean and sanitized.

Ice scoops must be stored with handles out of ice, in ice held in ice bins intended for human consumption.

Ice used to cool beverage lines attached to exposed cold plates may not be used for human consumption.

Packaged food shall not be stored in contact with water or undrained ice.

Raw fruits and vegetables shall be thoroughly washed with potable water before being cooked or served.

How must food be handled in mobile operations?

Food shall be prepared with the least possible manual contact using suitable utensils. An ice scoop or other suitable utensil must be used when dispensing ice.

How are dispensing utensils to be stored?

Dispensing utensils must be stored clean and dry or in the food with handles out of food; in potable running water with sufficient velocity to agitate and float off loose particle into an overflow; in water held at 135°F.

Malt collars and dispensing utensils used in preparing frozen desserts shall be stored in a potable, running water dipper well or clean and dry.

Ice scoops may not be stored in **ice machines** (makes ice) unless the ice machine is designed for such storage, such as has a built in bracket inside.

What is required of all employees when working in a mobile?

All employees are to be healthy, have clean clothing, have their hair under control and restrained, practice safe food handling procedures and wash their hands when needed.

What equipment and utensils can be used in a mobile?

All mobile handling exposed foods are required to have proper hand washing facilities. This would include hot and cold or warm water under pressure, soap, and paper towels.

A three compartment sink is required on all mobiles for washing utensils, if washing dishes continuously. An approved sanitizer is required to be used and test strips for the sanitizer used are to be available at all times to monitor the concentration of the sanitizing solution while in use.

A two compartment sink can only be used for utensil washing if utensils are only washed in small batches and this method has been approved by the licensor. A detergent/sanitizer must be used in both sides of the sink and utensils must be washed as outlined in OAC 3717-1-04.2(B) (4)

How are sanitizers to be used?

If you are using chlorine, quaternary ammonium chloride or iodine as a sanitizer in a three compartment sink, the first compartment would be used for detergent and water, the middle compartment would be used for a clear rinse and the third and last compartment would be used for the sanitizer:

Chlorine: 50-100 ppm in water no less than 100°F

Quaternary ammonium chloride: 200-400ppm (according to instructions)

Iodine: 12.5025 ppm

If other types of sanitizers or detergent/sanitizers are used, follow the manufacturer's directions and make sure that they are designed so that a final rinse is not required.

*******In all cases, follow the manufacturer's instructions! *******

Store wiping cloths in a solution of approved sanitizer at the recommended concentration.

How often is the equipment in a mobile operation required to be cleaned?

Equipment, food contact surfaces and utensils used to prepare potentially hazardous foods on a continuous basis shall be washed, rinsed and sanitized at intervals throughout the day based on the food temperature, type of food, and amount of food particle accumulation.

The food contact surfaces of grills, griddles, and similar cooking devices and the cavities and door seals of microwaves shall be cleaned at least once a day, except that this

requirement shall not apply to hot oil cooking equipment and hot oil filtering systems. The food contact surfaces of all cooking equipment shall be kept free of encrusted grease deposits and other accumulated soil as specified in OAC 3717-1-04.5. The cleaning and maintenance of heat treatment dispensing freezers will follow the requirements as specified in OAC 3717.1.08.1

Non-food contact surfaces of equipment shall be cleaned as often as is necessary to keep the equipment free of an accumulation of dust, dirt, food particles and other debris.

How are cleaned and sanitized equipment to be stored?

All cleaned and sanitized utensils shall be handled in a way to prevent contamination; knives, spoons and forks handles by handles only; cups, bowls, plates and similar items shall be handled without contact with inside surfaces or surfaces that contact the user's mouth.

Equipment must be stored at least 6 inches off the floor, must be air dried and stored in a self draining position.

How are single service utensils stored and dispensed?

Unless pre-wrapped, all knives, forks and spoons shall be dispensed with the handle of the utensil to the consumer. All cups, bowls, plates, etc. must be stored in a manner that will prevent contamination during storage and/or dispensing.

*******Reuse of single-service articles is prohibited*******

What are the requirements with regard to water that apply to a mobile?

All water used in a mobile must be from an approved source. It shall be adequate and shall be of a safe and sanitary quality. If a fresh water holding tank is used, it must be filled with water from an approved source, such as a city water supply.

Hot and cold or warm, running water under pressure must be provided to all fixtures while in operation. Bottle water may be used, but it must be obtained from a source that complies with applicable laws and handled and stored so that it will not become contaminated. Bottled and packaged water must be dispensed from the original container.

All mobiles must be equipped with a back-flow device to prevent possible contamination of public water supply if connected to water supply with a hose. If a hose is used, it must be a hose for delivery of potable water and not a standard garden hose. These hose usually have a blue stripe on them and state they are for drinking water.

If a fresh water holding tank is used, it must be separate from the holding tank for sewage.

How is the sewage disposed of in mobiles?

A holding tank, portable sewage dolly or “blue belly” must be available if a direct sewage connection is not provided. The portable tank must be properly emptied in an acceptable sanitary manner at a dumping station for this purpose. If a hose is connected to a sewer or dump site, it must be connected so there is no spillage of waste. This hose may only be used for sewage and wastewater.

What are the requirements of plumbing in mobiles?

The mobile unit is not covered by plumbing codes, but, if connected to a public water supply or public sewer, must follow plumbing codes when connecting. Examples are using a back flow prevention device on the hose bib and insuring a tight connection to the sewer outlet. **Hose bibs must have an ASSE 1012 or ASSE 1024 back flow prevention device installed.**

All sinks must have all drains going into the sewage holding tank or portable dolly.

Ice bin drains should not be directly connected to the sewage holding tank to prevent possible contamination of ice in the event of sewage back up.

A mop sink is not required in a mobile.

What facilities are required on mobiles to dispose of garbage and trash?

Trash containers that are leak proof, durable, cleanable, insect and rodent proof and that have tight fitting lids are required in all mobiles. Trash cans are to be covered at all times and dumped in approved dumpsters or other approved facilities when full to prevent insect and rodent attraction.

What are the requirements of floors, walls and ceilings in a mobile?

All floors, walls and ceilings are to be constructed of a material that is easily cleanable and nonporous and kept clean at all times.

If mats are used on the floors, they must be non-absorbent and grease resistant and kept clean. Carpeting may not be used.

Floors, wall and ceilings must be maintained in good repair at all times.

What are the lighting requirements in a mobile?

Permanently installed fixed artificial light sources shall be installed to provide at least fifty foot-candles of light on all food preparation surfaces and at equipment or utensil washing work levels. The lights must be properly shielded or shatter proof bulbs used to protect against broken glass falling onto food.

Infrared or other heat lamps shall be protected against breakage by a shield surrounding and extending beyond the bulb, leaving only the face of the bulb exposed.

How are chemicals and personal belongings to be stored on a mobile?

All chemicals needed to operate the mobile must be stored in their original containers and stored separately from all food products. Only those chemicals needed for the operation of the mobile are permitted.

Personal medication, clothing, etc. are to be stored so as not to contaminate food or food contact surfaces.

All pressurized tanks shall be chained or secured to a wall or fixed equipment.

Can a mobile be used as sleeping or living quarters?

Under no circumstances may a mobile be used as either sleeping or living quarters.

This booklet is intended to be a brief outline of some of the requirements needed for a mobile food service operation. It is in no way to be construed as being all the requirements needed to operate a mobile food service operation. The local health department, Chapter 3717 of the Ohio Revised Code and Chapter 3717-1 of the Ohio Administrative Code should be consulted to assure that all applicable criteria have been addressed.

Contact your local health department at:

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