Mobile Food Unit Plan Review & Permitting Guide

THURSTON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Environmental Health Division

Food & Environmental Services Section

www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehfood

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MOBILE FOOD UNIT PLAN REVIEW AND PERMITTING GUIDE

Prior to making any financial commitment or submitting any application packet to our office for review, we encourage those whom are interested to read through this guide and schedule a free 30 minute consultation with the Health Department to discuss plans or ask questions pertaining to your mobile food unit proposal. For productivity, please have your questions prepared in advance and provide any helpful information relating to the MFU, such as pictures, menus, food flows, commissary, drawings, equipment list, and operating procedures.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION:

This guide is an overview of mobile food units plan review and permits requirements and should not be considered all-inclusive. All mobile food units, such as: mobile trucks; trailers; or push carts selling or giving away foods or any item that requires temperature control MUST have a valid Thurston County Public Health and Social Services (Health Department) Mobile Food Unit permit to operate. To obtain a permit all mobile food unit applications must be reviewed and approved by the Health Department in accordance with the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 246-215 Retail Food Code and requirements as outlined in this mobile food unit guide and existing Health Department policies. Refer to WAC 246-215-121 Part 9 for specific mobile food unit requirements. Be advised, the initial plan review response may take up to three weeks, although sometimes longer depending how complete, accurate, and legible the application was submitted.

Key components a MFU applicant needs to consider prior to purchasing a mobile food unit:

1. Jurisdiction consent from city and/or county planning departments regarding zoning requirements and/or restrictions.
2. A properly equipped MFU with commercial grade equipment, and installed per manufacturer’s specifications.
3. Pressurized plumbing with adequate hot and cold water supply to the required number of sink(s) inside the MFU.
4. A signed commissary agreement with a permitted food establishment that is equipped and designed to support the MFU.

In general, an MFU is a vehicle, trailer or pushcart used to transport, assemble, and serve food that has initially been prepared at a permitted commissary location. Depending on the size of the MFU allowed, contact the city or county jurisdiction to determine if there are any ordinances or restrictions for operation. The following are a few other important notes and considerations prior to deciding to purchase and operate a mobile food business in Thurston County:

- An MFU is not a restaurant, but a way to transport already prepared foods from a commissary and receiving its final food preparation step inside the unit prior to serving orders to the customers.
- The MFU must be a vehicle, trailer, or pushcart, and must NOT require a “special use” permit from the State Department of Transportation to operate or transport. Bicycles or other self-powered modes of transport will not qualify as an MFU to prepare and sell food(s), but they may be permitted for transporting and selling commercial prepackaged foods(s) and beverages if the transport vehicle is approved for such type of service.
- Moveable buildings are not considered readily moveable and therefore not mentioned as an MFU in this guide.
- Knockdown food facilities are not considered as an MFU, such as a pop up canopy with equipment setup and hauled to and from a location by a vehicle or trailer. Such facilities are limited to public events, but only after applying for and receiving a Temporary Food Establishment Permit from the Health Department.
II. PLAN REVIEW APPLICATION INFORMATION:

1. **FEES:** Regardless of the age of the MFU, or whether it was once permitted in a different county, menu, size or type of the MFU, the applicant is expected to provide an application, with fees, if they plan to operate a MFU in Thurston County. The following are a few additional items to consider when planning a mobile food business:

   - The plan review fee is based on an hourly fee. For current fee rates please contact our office.
   - The annual MFU permit fee is based on risk categories. Except for push carts, all other MFUs are categorized as high risk due to additional time to monitor and regulate these permitted vehicles.
   - Any changes or additions to equipment, menu, or operation will require further plan review time and subject to additional plan review fees if deemed necessary.
   - The plan review fee is NOT REFUNDABLE.

2. **APPLICATION AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTATIONS:** Complete the entire MFU application and include ALL forms (i.e. food flow plan, equipment, site map/schedule, commissary and restroom agreements, water source, and waste water disposal verifications). The initial response to the plans is dependent on the reviewer’s workload. Submit the application packet in its entirety to reduce the time and cost to complete the plan review. If all the requested information based on the available checklist is not included, it will only delay the plan review and a letter will be sent requesting additional information. If we are missing a lot of information, the entire application package will be returned to the applicant. To expedite the review, we encourage typed applications and forms.

   MFU application, including all necessary forms, is available on our website at:
   
   [http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehfood/pdf/MobileFoodUnitApp.pdf](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehfood/pdf/MobileFoodUnitApp.pdf)

3. **MENU AND FOOD FLOW PLAN:** A detailed menu for your MFU is definitely required, along with a food preparation steps (i.e. Food Flow Plan) for each menu item. MFU equipment requirements shall depend on the menu items and the food safety risks associated with the complexity of the menu. Regardless of the menu, a MFU shall be categorized as HIGH RISK and push cart (with limited menus) are categorized as MINIMAL RISK.

   **MENU REQUIREMENTS:**
   
   - List all foods and beverages. Include whether foods are packaged, dispensed or stored on the MFU. Describe if foods being transferred to the MFU will be raw or fully cooked product.
   - Create and test your menu items first and then decide what size MFU, truck, trailer, refrigeration, equipment or setup will be necessary PRIOR to purchasing or designing the MFU. The menu and the MFU shall be a good match.
   - All food ingredients used on the menu shall be from an approved source. During inspections, vendor or supplier information and/or receipts shall be made available upon request for review. **Food, beverages and condiments prepared or stored in unapproved kitchens, garages, etc. is prohibited. All storage and food preparation must occur at approved locations.**
   - Limit the menu selection. Keep the menu simple, and easy to prepare and serve to the customers.
   - Any menu additions, changes or alterations shall be pre-approved by the health department.
FOOD FLOW PLAN:

- Compared to restaurants or delis with a full service kitchen, preparing food inside the MFU has many limitations and the food flow steps must be greatly reduced. Keep your menu items simple by limiting the number of steps while inside the MFU. Multiple food preparation steps should only occur at an approved commissary. Commercial prepackaged and/or pre-cooked products are encouraged in MFUs.
- Provide all food preparation steps for each of the menu item(s), including any prepared condiments and/or side dishes. Include food preparation steps will occur at the commissary and what food preparation steps will occur inside the MFU. Provide minimum required temperatures for each step.
- The food flow plan should convey how food is received, prepared, when/where it is made, how it is cooked, cooled, reheated, cold/hot held, and how it is packaged or served to the customer. Also, plan the handling of food after closing. Refer to enclosed example of a food flow plan.
- **COOLING FOODS ON MFU’s IS PROHIBITED.** Cooling is only allowed at the commissary. Hot foods on a MFU shall be discarded at the end of the day.

**Based on your proposed MFU, your menu may be reduced or restricted:** The regulatory authority (Health Department) may impose additional requirements to protect against health hazards related to the operation of a mobile food unit and may:

- Limit the food preparation steps;
- Prohibit some menu items; and
- Restrict the mode of operation when facilities or equipment are inadequate to protect public health.

4. **FLOOR PLAN & CONSTRUCTION DETAILS:** All MFU’s plan reviews are reliant on the menu and operation which often influences specific design and constructions requirements. Please refer to the following points:

> WE DO NOT ADVISE ANYONE TO CONSTRUCT, MODIFY OR REMODEL ANY MFU UNTIL THE PLANS HAVE BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT. WE CANNOT DETERMINE IF THE PROPOSED DESIGN AND PROPOSED MENU ARE A GOOD MATCH FOR EACH OTHER UNTIL BOTH HAVE BEEN REVIEWED CAREFULLY.

- All plans shall be legible, accurate and complete with all information required. Refer to the checklist.
- Provide scaled drawing of the layout/floor plan of the MFU and the commissary. Include dimensions (length, width and height) of the MFU. Common scale used for drawings is ¼ inch per foot.
- Show layout of all equipment and supplies including cash registers, sinks, refrigerators, tanks, steam tables, grease hood, trash cans, storage compartments, shelves, grill, heater, fryers, etc.
- Sealed or separate. For example, when installing and securing down equipment (i.e. fryers, grills, tables, etc.) that are butted to each other, the equipment should be flushed and sealed OR provide enough clearance to easily clean in-between and under all equipment pieces.
- Provide a finish schedule for the MFU’s walls, ceiling, and floor. Materials shall be smooth, durable, nonabsorbing, and easy to clean and maintain. Bare or exposed wood is not allowed or shall be sealed.
- Identify and show the location of lighting inside the MFU. There must be at least 50 foot candles inside the MFU and all lights shall be protected from shattering.
- Overhead protection is needed for MFU’s operated outdoors and/or where food is not covered. Overhead protection shall consist of, but not limited to, roofing, ceiling, awnings, or umbrellas. Permanent structures outside the MFU will require building department approval.
- The MFU shall be designed and built to protect against potential exposure to outside contaminants.
- Occupied MFU’s shall have a solid/tight fitting doorway for ingress and egress. MFU’s equipped with ramps, rollup, or cargo doors must remain closed or properly screened during hours of operation.
- Provide as many electrical outlets as needed to avoid extension cords from hindering cleaning, preventing equipment power failure, and from cluttering the work space inside the MFU.
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES (L&I):  
Whether new, used or remodeled, all occupied mobile food units (MFU) must obtain approval from L&I, which governs portable structures for such things as electrical wiring, plumbing, and any mechanical systems, such as gas piping, heating, cooling equipment, and fire safety. **L&I is considered the “building department” for mobile food units.** The applicant/owner shall provide documentation that L&I has approved and inspected your MFU before the health department’s final approval. A decal from L&I (see picture above) shall be affixed outside the MFU. However, if the health department has reason to believe the MFU has been modified since being issued a L&I decal, then a re-inspection of the MFU may be required by L&I to know it still conforms to L&I building code requirements.

Washington Department of Labor and Industries can be contacted at 360-902-5799, through their website at [www.lni.wa.gov/tradeslicensing/fas/types/vendmed/default.asp](http://www.lni.wa.gov/tradeslicensing/fas/types/vendmed/default.asp) or writing Washington State Department of Labor and Industries P.O. Box 44810 Olympia, WA 98504-4810.

6. **DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES:** The MFU (trailer or vehicle) must be registered by the Washington State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). If using a trailer as an MFU or towing a push cart, then proof of ownership or third party approval from someone else who has access to a tow vehicle shall be confirmed.

7. **OTHER JURISDICTION AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:** Contact city or county officials where you propose to operate the MFU in order to review your application for special use permits and/or zoning approval. Access Thurston County Geodata at [www.geodata.org](http://www.geodata.org) to search for relevant information concerning the location(s) to operate the MFU. Approval from city or county officials is required prior to issuing a permit to operate the MFU.

8. **PLUMBING SYSTEM DIAGRAM AND DETAILS:** Provide information on the entire plumbing system. The following items shall be followed when designing and constructing the water system for the MFU:

- The water system is designed and constructed in an approved manner in accordance to the *Washington State Retail Food Code Working Document, Chapter 5.3* for Mobile Water Tank and Mobile Food Establishment Water Tank (see page 12 for the link to the *Retail Food Code Working Document*).
- Provide plumbing schematic drawing of both fresh and wastewater system. All food contact equipment requiring drainage, such as refrigerators (non-evaporator type), ice, soda, and espresso machines must be plumbed to the holding tank. (see example on next page)
- Provide specifications on the hot water tank. There must be sufficient hot water to fill two of the three sink compartments and still enough hot water for using the hand washing sink all at one time.
- Water pumps shall provide at least 10 p.s.i. Gravity fed water systems are not allowed on MFUs.
- Freshwater must come from an approved source, refill tank thru a food-grade hose and a hose bib backflow device.
- The fresh water supply tank shall have 5 gallons minimum capacity for hand washing alone. With additional sinks installed on the MFU, fresh water tanks shall be sized to provide enough hot and cold water for hand washing, food preparation, utensil cleaning, sanitizing, and facility cleaning on the MFU. Preferably, the freshwater tank should have a minimum 35 gallon capacity and 42 gallon capacity for wastewater. Connecting several tanks together to meet capacity is acceptable if plumbed correctly.
- The wastewater holding tank must have at least **(15%) fifteen percent** more capacity than the fresh water supply tank. External wastewater storage tanks are not allowed. Once the wastewater tank is nearly full, the MFU must move to empty the tank at their approved disposal location or transfer it to an approved wastewater caddy to transport and dispose the wastewater in the approved location.
• Several removable wastewater tanks adding up to the required storage tank size are not allowed. A permanently installed single wastewater tank is required and must be an integral part of the MFU, but permanently connecting several tanks together to meet capacity is acceptable if plumbed correctly.

[EXAMPLE: PLUMBING SCHEMATIC (note air gap between sinks and waste tank)]

9. **EQUIPMENT AND SINKS:** Depending on the menu items served, specific sinks and equipment will be required. Only the menu and equipment provided to this department for approval will be permitted. Unless otherwise approved, the following items shall be required for mobile food units (MFU):

- Provide a complete list of all equipment to go inside the MFU. **Use the equipment list form provided.**
- All equipment, such as burners, grills, fryers, refrigerators, hoods, blenders, ovens, steam tables, roasting ovens, etc. **must** be commercial grade and bear the certified NSF stamp or equivalent.
- Residential (i.e. Maytag), merchandise, and recreational (i.e. Coleman) type refrigerators shall not be used for MFUs when storing potentially hazardous foods. Push carts are the exception and can use ice chests built into the push cart for cold holding non-potentially hazardous foods (i.e. hotdogs).
- All equipment and supplies must be stored within/on the MFU or in the commissary only.
- Refrigeration requirements are primarily based on the menu. Adequate refrigerated storage must be available for the separation of (high risk) potentially hazardous foods and ready-to-eat foods. Any menu item(s) requiring assembling prior to customer service (i.e. hamburgers, sandwiches, gyros, etc.) shall require a refrigerated food make/prep table. Prior to opening, refrigeration units may require professional service if it has been determined the unit is not working per the manufacturer’s specifications.
- Sufficient power (such as on site power through an outlet or generator) is required at each location to operate ALL cooking equipment and refrigeration or freezers simultaneously. Generators and gasoline containers must be stored away from food preparation and storage areas.
- Prior approval is required before new equipment is installed.
- A hood is required if cooking equipment is installed, such as fryers, grills, stove/oven, etc.

**V ADDITIONAL SINK REQUIREMENTS:**

- The MFU must provide a separate hand wash sink for employees that is accessible at all times of operation. It shall be equipped with a mixing faucet capable of delivering a minimum of one gallon/minute, hot water (min. 100°F) and cold water, soap, single-use towels, and a posted handwash sign. Splash shield(s) on side(s) of sinks may be required to protect from cross-contaminating food. If the hand sink is stored on moving tracks beneath a cabinet then the sink must be pulled out during operation. If an MFU consists of an outside BBQ/smoker, then a separate hand wash sink shall be plumbed and installed outside the MFU and conveniently located near the BBQ/smoker for easy access.
- The operating procedure and menu will determine if a three-compartment sink is required on the MFU, but in most cases it is typically required. To clean, all utensils, pots, and pans must fit or be submerged in each sink compartment. Also, a drain board and/or wire shelf is required for drying equipment.
If fruits or vegetables are washed in the MFU, a food preparation sink is required. The sink must include a drain board for drying and shall be indirectly plumbed with a one inch air gap in the waste line as illustrated on the right (see diagram).

10. **COMMISSARY OR SERVICING AREA:** The mobile food unit (MFU) must operate from an approved commissary or servicing area and shall return daily for supplies, thorough cleaning, and other MFU servicing activities. Regardless of the MFU’s setup, equipment, menu, plumbing, storage, or location, MFU’s shall report to their approved commissary or servicing area daily. **Use the commissary/servicing area form provided.**

   **COMMISSARY:** means a permitted food establishment (i.e. restaurant, deli, ) where food may be stored, cooked, prepared, portioned, or packaged daily and later be assembled and served on an MFU. It’s also a location where approved methods of cleaning and sanitizing the MFU are done daily.

   **SERVICING AREA:** means an operating base (i.e. approved location) in which a MFU returns at least daily for such things as vehicle cleaning, discharging liquid or solid waste, refilling water tanks, boarding or storing dry food supplies, equipment and paper products.

Commissaries are an approved food establishment equipped to support MFU activity. Commissaries or servicing areas located outside Thurston County may be accepted with the consent from other county health departments. Servicing areas do not need to possess a health permit; however, a grocery store is an ideal business for a servicing area since sufficient cold storage is available. However, working under a servicing area alone will limit the menu and food preparation steps for the MFU. The choice for either is primarily based on: the MFU design, menu items, site location, MFU equipment, MFU overnight storage, and the Health Department’s final approval. A full service MFU will always require a commissary location, but a servicing area can be added for additional support. To satisfy the requirements for either type of facility, the following items shall be acknowledged, addressed and in compliance with the Retail Food Code and this guidance document:

- **Use of a private resident as commissary or servicing area is prohibited.**
- Food and food contact supplies are not allowed to be stored in private vehicles unless enclosed in tight fitting washable container(s) and transporting to and from the commissary or source of purchase only.
- If requested, be prepared to provide a kitchen layout of the commissary (with equipment) when submitting plans for review. Commissaries must have permanent plumbing, uninterrupted power, adequate commercial refrigeration, sufficient dry storage, necessary sinks, such as food prep sinks, mop and ware washing facilities to accommodate the specific MFU menu items and any extra supplies.
- A servicing area is not approved for any type of MFU food preparation. Unless otherwise approved, only unopened, commercially packaged dry or canned goods and paper products can be stored at a servicing area. The storage area must be clean, maintained and protected from openings to the outside, or sources of contamination (i.e. chemicals, vehicle storage, etc.) If the servicing area is used for waste water disposal or refilling fresh water tanks inside the MFU, then the location must be on public water and sewer OR be on an approved public water and septic system. Use of a septic system requires additional review.
- An MFU must be stored securely at its approved commissary, servicing area, or other approved location during non-operation times to prevent tampering with the MFU and compromising the food.
- If equipped with refrigeration and storing potentially hazardous food overnight, MFU’s must demonstrate that their power supply is reliable and secured. If neither reliable nor secured, then all potentially hazardous foods shall be removed from the MFU and stored at a commissary after closing.
- Outbuildings or sheds used in conjunction with the MFU are not permissible and shall not be considered a servicing area, even if combined with LOTT wastewater disposal site.
• The commissary or servicing area must be open and available with the same hours as the MFU’s hours. If not, the mobile unit’s operators/employees must have key access to the commissary or servicing area. If operating without access to either, the MFU will be required to close.

• An agreement listing all services provided by the commissary/servicing area must be obtained, completed accurately, and signed by the owner(s) of the commissary and/or servicing area.

• If the commissary/servicing area agreement expires or changes, then a new signed agreement letter is required in order to continue to operate.

Prior to releasing the annual permit to operate each year, an updated commissary agreement forms shall be renewed and submitted to the Health Department.

11. RESTROOM AGREEMENT, SITE MAP, SCHEDULE DETAILS: When operating a mobile food units (MFU) at any location, the following requirements need to be addressed prior to daily operation:

   RESTROOM AGREEMENT: If parked at any location for more than one hour, restrooms shall be available for employees within two hundred (200) feet of the MFU. Avoid choosing restrooms that are located across multiple lanes of traffic or major intersections. Restrooms shall be provided with handwashing facilities equipped with warm running water, soap, and paper towels. An agreement letter granting restroom authorization is required. Access hours shall be in sync with the MFU’s hours of operation. Multiple restroom agreements may be required if the MFU is parked at various locations for more than one hour. Use restroom agreement form.

   Portable toilets may not be substituted as approved restrooms facilities for MFUs. These types of restroom facilities shall only be reserved for temporary purposes, such as for public events, fairs, etc. with an outside hand wash station.

   MFUs that choose to provide seating for their customers shall be required to provide approved restroom facilities within two hundred (200) feet of the MFU for their customers. If bathroom doors are locked during business hours, the MFU operator must provide access to allow customers to use the restroom if they were to request.

   NOTE: RESTROOM AND COMMISSARY AGREEMENT FORMS WILL BE MAILED EACH YEAR WITH THE ANNUAL PERMIT INVOICE AND SHALL BE COMPLETED AND RETURNED WITH THE PERMIT FEE. FAILURE TO RETURN EITHER AGREEMENT WILL RESULT IN PLACING A HOLD ON THE PERMIT; THE MFU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO OPERATE WITHOUT AN UPDATED AND CURRENT RESTROOM AND COMMISSARY AGREEMENT ON FILE WITH THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

   SITE MAP AND SCHEDULES/ITINERARIES: MFU’s need to provide a site map and schedule for their designated location(s). Provide location(s) of operation, whether it is a fixed location, and hours of operation and when the unit will be returned to the commissary. If there are numerous site locations, then several restroom agreements are required. Remember to always request approval from the land owner(s) and government jurisdiction(s) prior to setting up to operate the MFU. Use the itinerary form provided.

   TIP: Use Geodata website to provide a site map and mark where the MFU plans to be parked during operation.

   Provide an updated site location(s) and schedules/itineraries to the Health Department if the MFU plans to remain at the new location for longer than a 3 days. If the schedule changes, submit an updated itinerary form.
12. OPERATING PROCEDURES: This information is required to provide an outline of the MFU’s daily and routine activities. The following list of activities are a few examples which shall be addressed as part of the plan review:

1) Preloading time of the MFU at the commissary
2) How food will be transported from the source to MFU or commissary
3) Source and availability of power supply for the MFU during operation.
4) How and when the MFU will be moved
5) How and where fresh water tanks will be filled
6) How and where wastewater tanks will be emptied
7) How and when the MFU and utensils will be cleaned and sanitized
8) Details of food preparation and food storage at the commissary
9) Details of food preparation in the MFU
10) What happens to any food item (cooked or not) at the end of the day
11) How often will food deliveries be made to support the MFU, if necessary
12) Closing procedures for the MFU, including time returning to the commissary, unloading, solid waste removal, storage of supplies, and cleaning and maintenance of water and wastewater tanks
13) Where will the MFU be parked or stored while not in service

13. WATER SOURCE AND WASTEWATER DISPOSAL: Both water source and wastewater disposal approval is required for a MFU to operate. **Use the verification forms available to provide this information.**

WATER SOURCE: All commissaries or servicing areas must provide verification of an approved water source. If connecting to a public water system (i.e. city water), approval can be obtained by submitting a copy of the water bill of the location or consent of the water purveyor. If connecting to a public well system, then provide the public water system identification number. A few items to consider when connecting to a water system:

- The water source verification form is NOT required if the commissary or servicing area are connected to a permitted food establishment and is used as their ONLY source of water supply for the MFU operation.
- Hoses used for filling fresh water tanks must be or be made of food-grade material. These are typically white or blue RV hoses.
- Provide a hose bib backflow device attached to the water faucet when connecting the food grade filler hose to a public water source. This backflow device is available at any home improvement store.
- Provide a shut off valve for filling hoses. Store filling hoses in a sanitary manner. Keep both ends of hose off the floor/ground by sealing all inlets or store in a clean container or bag when not in use.
- Hoses used for filling fresh water tanks cannot be used for draining or cleaning wastewater tanks.
- NO PERMANENT OR CONTINUOUS WATER PRESSURE CONNECTIONS FROM ANY WATER SOURCE.
- Temporary water connections to the MFU water inlet are NOT allowed except under special circumstances (i.e. attending public events for several days with waste water removal availability).
- **IMPORTANT:** Refer to *Washington State Retail Food Code Working Document, Chapter 5.3*, for complete details on water system requirements specifically for MFU’s.

WASTEWATER: All commissaries or servicing areas must provide verification of an approved wastewater disposal site. If disposing the wastewater in public sewer system (i.e. city sewer, LOTT), approval can be obtained by submitting a copy of the sewer bill of the location, consent of the wastewater purveyor or contract with LOTT. If the commissary or servicing area will be connected on an onsite sewage system (i.e. septic tank system) for wastewater disposal, then the system must be reviewed and approved by the Health Department’s Onsite Wastewater Program. This review will be done in conjunction with the MFU plan review as part of the commissary or servicing area review. A few items to consider when holding or disposing waste water:
• Wastewater tanks shall be an integral part of the MFU. No external holding tanks outside the mobile food unit. Unless otherwise approved, such as for large public events, no direct or temporary connection to any sewer or onsite sewage system during normal hours of operation.
• PROVIDE NO PERMANENT CONNECTIONS TO ANY WASTE WATER DISPOSAL SYSTEMS.
• **Wastewater in holding tanks must be disposed of daily regardless of the wastewater level inside the tank.** Tanks shall be sloped to drain into a one inch hose inside diameter, or greater and equipped with a shut-off valve. No dumping wastewater onto the streets or ground.
• All connections on the MFU for servicing waste disposal shall be of a different size or type than those used for supplying fresh water to the MFU.
• Wastewater tanks shall be sized fifteen percent larger in capacity than the fresh water supply tank.
• If disposing waste water at more than one location, complete and provide additional Wastewater Verification forms and submit them to the health department so they can be filed.
• **IMPORTANT:** Refer to *Washington State Retail Food Code Working Document, Chapter 5.4* for complete details on wastewater system requirements specifically for MFUs.
• Use of a portable holding waste tank to remove and transport wastewater is acceptable, but it shall not remain connected to the MFU during normal hours of operation.

**IF THE APPROVED WATER SOURCE OR WASTEWATER SITE CHANGES FOR ANY REASON, PLEASE NOTIFY THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND SUBMIT A NEW WASTE WATER AND/OR WATER SOURCE VERIFICATION FORM.**
III. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

A. MOBILE FOOD CART- Mobile food carts, also known as push carts, are defined as a mobile food unit (MFU) which can be easily moved between locations by either being pushed OR pulled by a single person. These push carts have very limited menus, but approved to serve hot dogs, coffee, beverages and other non-potentially hazardous foods which are considered low risk. THERE IS NO PREPARATION OR STORAGE OF POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS FOOD ALLOWED ON A MOBILE FOOD CART. The following list of items are only a few common requirements that mobile food carts must come into compliance with when operating in Thurston County:

1) Push carts have several limitations and require specific requirements to operate as a mobile food unit.
2) The only meat product allowed are hotdogs. No other processed meats are allowed without approval.
3) The only hot holding condiments allowed for hotdogs will be: sauerkraut, chili sauce and nacho sauce. All other condiments shall be from individual packages or dispenser bottles. Unless otherwise approved, hot holding items, such as those earlier mentioned, shall only be applied by the operator. As a reminder, all leftover hot holding items are to be completely discarded at the end of each business day.
4) Condiments not in individual packages need to be provided in dispenser bottles or in other approved containers with self-closing lids that offer protection from cross contamination.
5) All preparation, packaging, or portioning of non-potentially hazardous foods (i.e. plastic wrapped muffins) must be done at the commissary. Prepackaged snacks (i.e. chips, cookies, candy bars, etc.) are acceptable.
6) No deep fryers, blenders or juicers on the mobile food carts.
7) Milk for espresso must be steamed for immediate service only and the pitcher placed in the cooler until the next order. Discard leftover steamed milk at the end of the day.
8) An ice chest is approved when cold holding milk for espresso and hot dogs. The ice chest must be separate from the drinks and as part of the push cart. There shall be a few inches of ice on all sides and bottom of the food to maintain 41˚F or less. Only approved ice used for cold holding and no use of “blue ice” packs. A thermometer shall be secured to an upper inside wall of the ice chest. Ice chest used for this purpose must have a built-in drain and plumbed to drain into a waste water tank beneath the push cart.
9) The only external equipment that may support the push cart is an ice chest for cold storing non-potentially hazardous beverages (i.e. soda, water, etc.) It is acceptable to store unopened milk containers for espresso or sealed hotdog packages.
10) Unless otherwise approved, no additional grills, work tables, etc. to support the push cart unless attached.
11) Once ice has been used for keeping beverages cold, it must not be used for any direct food contact.
12) Overhead protection (i.e. umbrella, etc.) is required. With inclement weather, such as heavy winds and rain, push carts are to close for business until the weather improves to reopen.
13) All food containers, whether cold or hot holding food items, must have tight fitting lids to cover and protect the food from cross-contamination at all times.
14) Food products and supplies must be stored on the push cart or in the commissary. No overnight storage in tow vehicles and any food stored during transport shall be protected in a container with a secure lid.
15) A three compartment sink is not required for push carts; however, the operator shall provide a sufficient number of utensils (i.e. tongs) for use during the day.
16) Used utensils shall be exchanged with clean utensils at least every 4 hours. Also, provide separate labeled, clean and dirty containers for storing utensils while open.
17) A hand sink with soap and towels is required and shall be kept accessible during all hours of operation. If designed as a pull out, it must remain pulled out during hours of operation. Hand sinks are not to be used for storage or cleaning and NOT used for dumping.
18) At the beginning or end of the business day, the push cart shall return to the commissary or servicing area for cleaning, wastewater disposal, potable water refilling, and restocking, etc.
19) The push cart shall have the business name clearly posted and visible from the street and customers.
20) There are size restrictions for push carts. Contact your city planning officials for further information.
B. **MOBILE CATERING FOOD UNIT** - This type of MFU’s is a vehicle approved to transport and sell an assortment of prepackaged food(s), cold holding foods, fruits, hot holding foods and various types of beverages for self-service. Actual food preparation is not allowed on these type MFUs. Due to hot holding, these type of MFUs are classified as HIGH RISK. The following list of items are general requirements catered around this type of MFU:

1) All preparation and packaging must be done at the commissary, for instance, packaging muffins or pastry items with plastic wrap. Proper food preparation procedures and adequate facilities must be used.
2) Potentially hazardous foods must be stored at 41°F or less if cold holding, or 135°F or above if hot holding on the MFU. Cold holding potentially hazardous foods shall be displayed in mechanical commercial refrigerator (i.e. NSF), although packed ice is commonly used in conjunction with refrigeration.
3) All food equipment used on the MFU shall be of commercial grade quality or equivalent.
4) Ice bins used to store non-potentially hazardous foods shall have an interior food contact surface that is smooth, cleanable, durable, and drains into a wastewater tank. No rust or corrosion with the metal. Any ice used for cold holding shall not be used for human consumption.
5) All food supplies must come from an approved source under Washington State Department of Agriculture or USDA jurisdictions and requirements. Prepackaged or processed foods offered hot shall be heated to 135°F at the commissary prior to transferring the hot foods to the MFU’s hot holding display cabinet(s).
6) End of each business day, all hot food items shall be discarded at the commissary. No cooling or reheating.
7) Handsinks are not required on the MFU, but there shall be no open food products or packages prepared or handled by the MFU operator during hours of operation. All food on these MFUs are for self-service only.
8) Thermometers must be visible and located in all refrigerator units and inside all hot holding cabinets.
9) Open food product is not allowed. The operator cannot open food packages or handle unwrapped food. Keep all foods protected during hours of operation.
10) All fruits with edible skins (i.e. apples) shall be washed at the commissary and wrapped for protection.
11) Microwaves are allowed on these types of MFUs, but only the customer can open the food packages and heat their food in the microwave to their own satisfaction.
12) All single-service utensils shall be stored in a manner so all the utensil handles are in the same direction to avoid customers from potentially contaminating the heads of the utensils (i.e. spoons, forks, knives).
13) All food products and supplies shall be stored in the mobile catering food unit or in the commissary or servicing area. Keep all food and single-service items protected from dust, insects, etc. when on display.
14) Condiments shall be protected from cross contamination with the use of individual squeeze packages, squeeze bottles or other approved containers with attached or hinged lids.
15) Bicycles or other types of self-powered modes of transportation may be permitted with this type of mobile food operation if proper equipment is installed and the operating procedures has been approved.
16) The mobile catering food truck shall have the business name clearly labeled so it is clearly visible.
17) At the end of the business day, the MFU shall return to the commissary/servicing area.
18) The MFU storage location shall be approved. If overnight power is required for the MFU, then the plug shall be locked and secured to an outlet to prevent loss of power or tampering. **If not secured, all perishable foods shall be removed from the MFU and stored in a commissary refrigerator.**
C. **STANDARD MOBILE FOOD UNIT** - A vehicle or trailer that is serving food in a MFU may serve non-potentially hazardous foods and/or **LIMITED** food preparation of potentially hazardous foods inside the MFU. Limited food preparation means the menu is designed to conduct the most complex and risky food steps at the commissary and limited or reduced steps in the MFU. Due to the menu, these types of MFU are normally permitted as HIGH RISK.

**NOTE:** The types of menus we advise for MFU’s are those that are prepared, processed, cooked, and cooled at an approved commissary. As needed, the food is transferred to the MFU for reheating, hot or cold holding and later be served. MFU’s with more complex menus and many preparation steps inside the MFU may experience an extensive plan review time and possibly be subject to menu and food preparations restrictions as per the Retail Food Code.

The following lists of items are specific requirements for these types of mobile food units:

1) Any advance food preparation must be done in the commissary; including but not limited to, cooling, chopping lettuce, cutting tomatoes, slicing or trimming meat, making soup, making dough balls, roasting, forming patties, cooking and cooling beans, cooking ground beef, washing vegetables, marinating, etc.

2) **Commercial grade mechanical refrigeration is required for ALL potentially hazardous foods.** The size of the refrigerator may vary on the menu and operating procedures; size your refrigerator so that it does not limit your capability to store and serve your menu items whether inside the commissary or the MFU.

3) Potentially hazardous foods prepared on the MFU shall be served the same day. All leftover food in hot hold (i.e. steam tables, etc.) in the MFU must be discarded at the end of each business day.

4) Food on the MFU shall NOT be reheated more than once and there is absolutely NO COOLING for any food that has been heated, cooked or hot held on the MFU.

5) Food processed at an approved food processing plant inspected by WSDA, FDA or USDA and used on the MFU may be heated for hot holding to 135°F and shall not take more than 1 hour to heat on the MFU.

6) All mechanical equipment on the MFU shall be pre-heated or pre-chilled while parked at the commissary.

7) Thermometers must be provided inside cold and hot holding units. Provide thermometer for cooking.

8) With exception to approved barbecues and generators, there shall be no additional equipment, storage devices, tanks, accessories, etc., outside the MFU. The barbecue shall be in close proximity to the MFU and supported with a plumbed outside hand sink. There shall be no processing, portioning, preparation, or assembly of food outside. Provide a security barrier around the barbecue area during hours of operation.

9) Cooking raw meat on the MFU is restricted to thin foods, such as hamburger patties, steaks, chicken, etc. Unless approved, cooking raw meats greater than one inch in thickness is not allowed with MFUs. Foods greater than one inch thickness may be cooked at the commissary first. If cooling intact large pieces of meat, it must be no more than 4 inches thick, uncovered, and cooled in shallow pans in the commissary. After cooled to 41°F, the meat can be transferred to an MFU and reheated to 165°F to hot hold later.

10) Steam tables used for hot holding food only shall NOT be used to reheat food to 165°F.

11) A three compartment sink may be required inside the MFU. This requirement typically depends on the MFU’s operating procedure and the menu, such as preparing any menu items from raw product(s).

12) Mechanical exhaust ventilation equipment or grease hoods are required for any grease-laden vapors generated inside the MFU, such as over any grills, ranges, or deep fryers. Deep fryers shall need tight fitting, heat resistant covers that are lockable during the unit transport. Makeup air must be available.

13) Condiments not in individual packages are provided in dispenser bottles or in other containers protected from contamination.

14) At the end of the business day, the MFU shall return to the commissary/servicing area for daily cleaning, wastewater disposal, fresh water refill, and restocking, etc.

15) The MFU storage location shall be approved. If on-site power is required for the MFU to function overnight, then the plug shall be secured to an outlet to prevent loss of power. **If not secured, all**
refrigerated foods shall be removed from the MFU and stored in the commissary refrigerator for overnight storage.

16) The MFU shall have business name clearly posted so it is visible from the street and customer side.
IV. **PRE-OPENING INSPECTION AND FINAL APPROVAL/PERMITTING PROCESS:**

Once the plans have been approved and the MFU is ready for pre-opening inspection, the applicant and/or owner must see that the following items are checked and/or addressed accordingly prior to scheduling for an appointment:

1. Contact the health department to schedule a pre-opening inspection with at least 10 days advance notice.
2. Pre-opening inspections require the MFU to be brought over to the Health Department or the commissary location for inspection if the MFU is too large for the health department’s parking lot.
3. The MFU must be set up and ready for use as if opening. This means all equipment is in place and operable; including, but not limited to refrigerators (pre-chill in advance), hot holding, lights, ventilation, pumps, hot water heater, hand soap/paper towels are on hand, handwash sign posted, and all construction debris and materials removed. **Note:** electrical power is not provided at the health department so bring a generator.
4. Provide a glass of liquid (i.e. bottle water) inside the **pre-chilled** refrigerator(s) to check temperatures. Make sure all refrigerators have working thermometers securely located near the warmest part of the refrigerator (i.e. door and opposite corner of fan). **Note:** service to the older refrigerator(s) may be required if necessary.
5. Replace any torn, ripped or missing door gaskets to refrigerators. Clean inside refrigerators thoroughly.
6. Provide a food grade filling hose (i.e. white or blue RV hose), together with a backflow hose bib device and store in a clean container when not in use.
7. Provide sanitizer bucket for storing wiping cloths and chemical test strips to monitor the sanitizer solution.
8. Unless already provided, a current site location(s), schedule and restrooms agreement(s), this information must be provided no later than the time of the pre-opening inspection and done prior to issuing a permit.
9. The business name of the MFU must be displayed and visible from the road and on the MFU customer side.
10. If the MFU can be occupied and enclosed, than the MFU must have an L&I decal affixed outside the MFU.
11. The MFU must be registered by DMV. If the MFU is a trailer or push cart, then the owner(s) of the trailer shall provide DMV records or a letter of authorization indicating they have ownership or access to a tow vehicle that is capable of towing the MFU.
12. All surfaces (including all equipment) must be easily cleanable and have already been cleaned and sanitized. Seal all crevices, nooks or openings where food debris, grease, grime, dirt may collect or areas where cleaning maybe difficult due to lack of accessibility or the inability to maneuver equipment to clean around.
13. At least one person shall provide a valid food work card and be considered the person-in-charge for opening.
14. After the MFU has been inspected and approved, the applicable MFU permit fee and any additional plan review fees will be sent to the mailing address listed on the application.
15. **Once everything has been approved and all fees have been paid in full, we shall issue the MFU permit. Post the permit to the MFU so it is clearly visible on the customer side of the vehicle, trailer or push cart.**

**Once permitted, the MFU is approved to operate in Thurston County.** A few key points to remember prior to operating:

1) The MFU shall remain readily movable at all times. Parking the MFU with no plans to relocate or return daily to the commissary or servicing area is prohibited.

2) Update your site location(s) / itineraries and restroom agreement(s) if there are any changes, but required annually.

3) If there are any significant changes to the menu or equipment, contact the health department.

4) The MFU and all operations and equipment shall be seen as one integral part, meaning there is no additional equipment, add-ons or accessories outside the MFU.

5) If there were any pre-opening conditions noted on the pre-opening inspection form, they must be completed prior to opening for business.
6) Upon hire, employees have two weeks to obtain their food worker card. As a reminder, routine health inspections are conducted at least twice a year with one inspection at the site location on file and the other inspection conducted with the MFU at the approved commissary.

The intent of this guide is to assist the MFU applicant or owner to better identify and understand MFU application requirements and expectations upon opening and operating a mobile food business. Owners and/or applicants are responsible to meet the requirements of this guide along with the Washington State Retail Food Code -Washington Administrative Code Chapter 246-215 which is found at: [http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/food/ruleworkingdoc.pdf](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/food/ruleworkingdoc.pdf)

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