

What is a mobile food service operation?

A mobile food service operation is an operation that:

- is operated from a movable vehicle, portable structure, or watercraft;
- routinely changes location;
- does not remain at any one location for more than forty consecutive days.

This definition was developed to address food service operations that are truly of a mobile nature who “routinely” or “regularly” change locations. Moving a mobile unit a few feet or pulling an operation around the block and returning to the same location does not comply with the intent of the law.

*** If all of the conditions above are not met then the operation cannot be licensed as a mobile food service operation and must be licensed in a different food service category.**

What are the different types of mobile units out there?

1) Concession Trailers / Trucks:

Concession Trailers and Trucks are fully self-contained units with mechanical refrigeration, a complete plumbing system including a hot water tank, and plenty of storage space for multiple day events. These are generally considered “restaurants on wheels.”

Basic Requirements for Concession Trailers / Trucks:

1) Concession Trailers / Trucks that prepare or cook food for customers should contain the following:

- a. Commercial cooking equipment.
- b. Commercial refrigerators / freezers that are not moved from the concession unit.
- c. Sink systems that are large enough to handle all items that must be washed, rinsed and sanitized in the concession. A three compartment sink with a faucet must be provided for this purpose.
- d. A handwash sink with hot and cold water under pressure, handsoap, paper towels, and a handwash sign must also be provided in the unit.
- e. A water system, with a recommended minimum of 5 gallons (i.e. holding tank) that can handle the hot water needs of the concession trailer must be installed.
- f. A wastewater system (i.e. wastewater holding tank) must be provided in the unit as well.
- g. Adequate food and dry goods storage inside the unit.

2) All food preparation, handling, storage, and employee illness procedures that pertain to a restaurant apply to a Mobile Food Concession as well. Remember, it is a restaurant on wheels.

All food served at the concession must be made at the concession or in a licensed food facility.

2) Pushcarts:

Pushcarts usually come in two different configurations; those in which the operator stands inside the cart and those in which they stand behind the cart.

Basic Requirements for Pushcarts:

1) Pushcarts should contain the following:

- a. They usually have a grill, flat top, or hot hold steam table that is part of the body of the cart. A mechanical, cold storage unit is installed into the body of the cart as well.
- b. A handwash sink with hot and cold water under pressure, handsoap, paper towels, and a handwash sign must be provided in the unit.
- c. The cart must have an integral sink system that is large enough to handle all of the items that must be washed/rinsed/sanitized. A three compartment sink with a faucet must be provided for this purpose, as well as an adequate water supply and wastewater holding tank.
- d. If all operations, including all food preparation and warewashing, can not be performed within the mobile unit, a commissary must be provided in which an operator begins and ends their day. Licensed food facilities or grocery stores are commonly used commissaries for pushcart operators. In addition, all mobile units operating with the use of commissary will be restricted to operating within the limits of Jackson County.

A commissary agreement form must be signed annually by the owner of the mobile unit and the owner / operator of the commissary before the Mobile Food Service License is issued. The owner or operator shall agree to prepare, store, and cook food at the licensed commissary. In addition, the owner / operator agrees to wash, rinse, and sanitize all utensils and equipment, dispose of solid waste, and refill the water supply at the licensed commissary.

2) Food to be served will be prepared on the licensed concession cart or in the licensed commissary. No food preparation will be allowed from an unlicensed kitchen.

3) A commissary is considered to be a permanent location, not a different mobile unit.

4) All food preparation, handling, storage, and employee illness procedures that pertain to a restaurant apply to a Mobile Food Concession Cart as well.

5) Pushcarts are referred to as restricted mobile units and will be notated as such on the back of the license, as well as the address of the licensed commissary.

3) Knockdown Concessions:

A knockdown concession consists of a tent and tables which is built and then knocked down at each event. At first impression it may seem like the easiest way to obtain a mobile concession business but in reality they require the most work of all the mobile types.

Basic Requirements for Knockdown Concessions:

1) Knockdown Concession stands should contain the following:

- a. The stand must be set up on a non-absorbent ground surface such as concrete or asphalt, otherwise a tarp must be placed on the ground surface for easy clean-up. Grass or dirt floors are not permitted due to the possible contamination from dust, dirt, or even mud (if inclement weather occurs).
- b. Just like all of the other types of mobile units, commercial equipment is required including mechanical refrigeration, chest freezers, hot hold units, to name a few.
- c. There must be a portable three compartment sink system with a faucet and sink basins large enough to accommodate the largest piece of equipment at the concession for proper washing, rinsing, and sanitizing.
- d. A portable handwash sink station with hot and cold water under pressure, handsoap, paper towels, and a handwash sign must be provided in the unit.

- e. Water systems that can handle the hot water needs of the food service must be set-up at each event.
- f. There must also be a wastewater disposal system in place to properly collect all of the grey water that is generated from the three compartment and handwash sinks during the event. A holding tank or “blue boy” is generally used for this purpose.
- g. Some type of roof must be provided in case of inclement weather and to protect the food during preparation and storage from possible overhead contamination. A 10 x 10 pop up tent is generally used for this purpose. Make sure to check with local fire authorities as cooking on an open flame under a tent is generally not permitted due to the risk of fire.
- h. Ensure that adequate food storage is provided. Many times a stock truck can provide the additional storage space needed, however any additional storage areas will be inspected for cleanliness.

2) Food to be served from the knockdown concession will be prepared at the concession. No food preparation will be allowed from an unlicensed home kitchen and brought to the concession for sale.

4) Frozen Food Trucks / Carts:

A frozen food truck or cart is a mobile motorized or non-motorized concession on wheels that normally contains a commercial freezer and only prepackaged frozen product.

Basic Requirements for Frozen Food Trucks / Carts:

- 1) Frozen Food Trucks / Carts should contain the following:
 - a. The frozen food in the licensed mobile unit must be received in its frozen state, prepackaged, and from a licensed commercial distributor.
 - b. Frozen food being held in storage before sale to the public is prohibited from being stored inside a non-licensed residence.
 - c. Just like all of the other types of mobile units commercial equipment is required.
 - d. This is the only type of licensed unit in which no plumbing system, handwash sink, or three compartment sink is required since no open food or preparation is taking place.

5) Catering Type Delivery Truck:

Catering type trucks carry prepackaged and non-prepackaged hot and cold type foods.

Basic Requirements for Catering Type Trucks:

- 1) Catering Type Delivery trucks should contain the following:
 - a. These truck types carry only prepackaged hot or cold foods and are not required to have a handwash or three compartment sink system.
 - b. Foods must maintain proper holding temperatures at all times.
 - c. Packaged food on these trucks must come from a wholesale type facility that is inspected and licensed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture.
 - d. Catering trucks that have any type of commercial food preparation grill or soup warmer must meet the same requirements as a concession trailer as previously detailed.

6) Mobile Cookers / BBQ pits:

A Mobile Cooker / BBQ pit is virtually an oven on wheels. The cooking unit is mounted to the frame of the trailer unit.

Basic Requirements for Mobile Cookers / BBQ pits:

- 1) Mobile Cookers / BBQ pits should contain the following:

- a. The mobile cooker concession must have all the infrastructure of a concession trailer or knockdown unit such as a three compartment sink, handwash sink, water and wastewater holding tank, adequate storage space, commercial equipment, etc.
 - b. Most mobile cooker trailers utilize an auxillary unit either consisting of another trailer or knockdown concession stand due to infrastructure needs.
- 2) Food to be served from the knockdown concession will be prepared at the concession. No food preparation will be allowed from an unlicensed home kitchen and brought to the concession for sale.

General Notes:

There may be local regulations that limit where and when some or all of these mobile units operate. An example of this may be a sidewalk vendor or Peddler's Permit issued by a city. Always contact local permit or zoning departments for additional information and requirements.

All mobile units must have identification on the body of the unit at least 3" tall and 1" wide which contain the following information:

- 1) Mobile unit name
- 2) City, State, Zip code
- 3) Area code and phone number

Remember that all equipment in a license mobile unit must be of commercial grade and approved from an accredited agency, i.e. NSF, UL Listed, etc. No residential equipment is allowed for use.

A food grade water hose must be used for potable water.

As previously mentioned the health district must post on the back of each license the layout of the operation including the location and type of major equipment, the menu, the license plate number or unit number, any restrictions or exemptions regarding the unit, commissary location (if applicable), and sanitarian information.

One complete standard inspection must be completed by the licensing health department at least once during the licensing year (conducted prior to obtaining the license). In addition, inspections may be conducted as necessary by the health district as well as other health districts in Ohio in which the licensee is set up and selling their product. When an inspection is conducted by a health district other than the licensing district, a copy of the inspection report may be sent to the health district issuing the license.

If food product is to be stored at the physical address of the home base of operations for the mobile unit, a license must be procured from the Ohio Department of Agriculture. More information can be found at <http://www.agri.ohio.gov/apps/odalicensing/odalicensing.aspx> These licenses include the "Food Safety (cold storage)" and "Food Safety (frozen food)" type licenses. An appointment must be made with an ODA inspector to inspect the storage area and if all requirements are met a typical turnaround to receive the license is approximately two weeks.

In accordance with Jackson County Health Department, the owner or operator of the pushcart / mobile unit agrees to operate from a licensed food service or food establishment as defined in OAC 3717-1-01, which also includes commissaries. The owner or operator shall agree to store all food product and utensils in the licensed facility (commissary). The preparation and cooking of food product, in addition to washing, rinsing and sanitizing of all utensils and equipment, disposing of solid waste, and refilling the water supply shall be conducted in the licensed facility (commissary) if these procedures cannot be performed in the mobile unit itself. This stipulation usually affects mobile carts which do not have the capacity to function as a self contained "restaurant on wheels".

THE ORIGINAL LICENSE MUST BE AT THE UNIT AT ALL TIMES DURING OPERATION.

Copies of the license are never accepted as substitutes.

Example of mobile layout and the information present on the back of the license:

