



# Alabama Department of Public Health Requirements for Mobile Food Units

Adopted by State Board of Health November 18, 2021

**(1) General** – Mobile food establishments, units, or pushcarts shall comply with the requirements of the rules of the State Board of Health. The Health Officer may impose additional requirements to protect against health hazards related to the conduct of the food service establishment as a mobile operation, may prohibit the sale of some or all potentially hazardous food, and when no health hazard will result, may waive or modify requirements of this rule relating to physical facilities, except those requirements of (6) “Commissary base of operations” listed below. Pushcarts shall have overhead protection, such as an umbrella, to cover the food area.

## **(2) Restricted Operation -**

(a) A mobile food establishment or unit shall 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 shall be the responsibility of the mobile food establishment operator and the commissary permit holder to obtain proper approval and authorization to operate within each county.

(b) Mobile food units or pushcarts serving only food prepared, packaged in individual servings, transported and stored under conditions meeting the requirements of these rules, or beverages that are not potentially hazardous and are dispensed from covered dispensers, covered urns, or other protected equipment, need not comply with requirements of these rules pertaining to the necessity of water and waste water systems nor to those requirements pertaining to the cleaning and sanitization of equipment and utensils, if the required equipment for cleaning and sanitizing exists at the commissary.

(c) During operation, all food shall be conveyed, held, stored, displayed, and served from the mobile food unit, *except that pull-behind trailer units used only for cooking may be allowed if pre-approved by the Health Officer.*

(d) All foods, single service articles, single use articles, and other items used for the operation of the mobile food unit shall be stored at the approved commissary other than during normal business operation of the mobile food unit, *except that potentially hazardous foods in packages or containers that have been opened, including opened or unpackaged potentially hazardous foods in holding bins on the mobile food unit, shall be discarded after each day’s operation.*

## **(3) Requirements -**

(a) Public health protection - Mobile food units or pushcarts shall have the appropriate facilities to provide public health protection for the specific type of food operation conducted on or at the mobile unit or pushcart according to Appendix “A.”

(b) Handwashing facilities - Handwashing facilities shall be provided on the mobile food establishment or pushcart where any food preparation activities are

conducted or unpackaged foods are handled. This facility shall include a sink, soap and towels in dispensers, and a reliable supply of hot and cold water dispensed through a mixing valve faucet. Facilities to heat water shall be on the mobile food unit. The facilities and supplies shall be located to be easily accessible and unobstructed for use by the operator. Gloves may not be allowed as a substitute for a handwashing facility.

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

(d) Mobile food unit identification - The business name and address of the commissary, as shown on the commissary's Food Permit, and telephone number of the commissary, shall be permanently placed on at least two sides of the mobile food unit. Lettering shall be legible, clearly visible to the public from the service area, and of a color contrasting with the unit exterior. The name shall be in letters at least three inches high with strokes of at least 3/8 inch width. The address and telephone number shall be in letters at least one inch high.

(e) Plan review -

1. A drawing showing the location of the mobile unit or pushcart's water supply tank, waste water retention tank, handwashing facility, utensil washing facility, food storage compartments and any other pertinent information requested by the Health Officer shall be provided in conjunction with the commissary plan review required in section (6)(c) below.

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

(i.) be at any one sales location, or essentially the same sales location, for longer than two hours,

(ii.) be at any sales location that is more than two hours travel time from the commissary, or

(iii.) operate in a county other than where the commissary is located.

3. For any location where the mobile food establishment is proposed to stay for two or more hours, the plan of operations shall provide for toilet facilities for the operator. These toilet facilities shall be in a permanent building that is not a private residence; shall be readily available for use by the mobile food unit operator; within approximately 200 feet of the mobile food unit's location unless otherwise approved by the Health Officer; and except for ventilation and ceiling construction, meet the requirements of these rules for food establishment toilet rooms.

#### **(4) Responsibility of commissary permit holder -**

It shall be the responsibility of the commissary permit holder to comply with the provisions of the approved plan of operations. Failure to comply with the provisions of

the plan of operations, including preventing critical item violations on the mobile food unit, shall 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.

**(5) Caterer** - Caterers shall furnish the following information along with the application for a Food Permit:

(a) A list of the general types of foods proposed to be catered such as "barbecue pork", "baked goods" or similar general descriptions;

(b) A description of food preparation processes and, if potentially hazardous food is to be cooled prior to service, a description of cooling methods; and,

(c) A description of methods and equipment for food storage, food display, and food service.

**(6) Commissary base of operations -**

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

(b) The commissary or other fixed food service establishment used as a base of operation for mobile food units or pushcarts shall include, at a minimum, in accordance with the Appendix, employee toilet facilities, a handwashing sink, a warewashing sink, a servicing area, and be constructed and operated in compliance with these rules.

(c) An existing food establishment proposing to convert to a commissary for a mobile food establishment shall first furnish plans for review and approval showing compliance with the requirements of these rules for a servicing area as specified in Section 6 below, the proposed storage area for foods and other supplies, and, if the mobile unit is a pushcart, the covered and protected storage area reserved for the pushcart.

(d) The commissary owner shall make the mobile food units or pushcarts available for inspection at the commissary at any reasonable time as requested by the Health Officer. In the event a mobile food unit or pushcart cannot be presented for inspection at the commissary, the commissary's permit shall be suspended.

**(7) Mobile Food Unit Servicing Area -**

(a) A mobile food unit servicing area shall be provided and should include overhead protection for any supplying, cleaning or servicing operation. *This servicing area will not be required where only packaged food is placed on the mobile food unit or pushcart or where mobile food units do not contain water tanks or waste waterretention tanks.*

(b) Within this servicing area, there shall be a location provided for the flushing and drainage of liquid wastes separate from the location provided for water servicing and for the loading and unloading of food and related supplies.

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

(d) The construction of the walls and ceilings of the servicing area is exempted from the provisions of the Food Establishment Sanitation Rules pertaining to Physical Facilities.

**APPENDIX**  
**REQUIREMENTS by menu and type of Mobile Unit.**  
The key to the numbers is on the next page.

<b>FOOD ITEM</b>	<b>PUSHCART</b>	<b>SELF-PROPELLED VEHICLE</b>
Pre-packaged PHF*	1 or 2 6 9	1 or 2 6 9
Dispensing raw shrimp or raw fish (not pre-wrapped).	Not allowed on a pushcart.	1 or 2 3 6 7 10
Unpackaged "Category 2" items	1 or 2 3 4 or 5 or 7 6 (for PHF) 9	1 or 2 3 4 or 5 or 7 6 (for PHF) 9
Heating or hot holding a pre-cooked PHF* food (unpackaged), or heating non-PHF*	1 or 2 3 4 or 5 or 7 6 (for PHF) 9 PHF must meet definition of Priority Category 2 Food.	1 or 2 3 4 or 5 or 7 6 (for PHF) 8 9
Cooking raw PHF*	Not allowed on a pushcart	1 or 2 3 4 6 8 9

\*PHF = Potentially Hazardous Food

THESE ARE GENERAL REQUIREMENTS BASED ON BROAD MENU CATEGORIES. A SPECIFIC MENU AND OPERATION MAY REQUIRE ADDITIONAL FACILITIES.

## Key to chart on previous page

- 1- Operate from a commissary meeting all requirements of 420-3-22-.09. The commissary must have, at a minimum, facilities to store food at the required temperatures, a toilet facility and, *except when all food is prepackaged*, fill potablewater tanks, empty wastewater tanks, provide a handwashing sink, provide an appropriate warewashing sink and all required items of the Food Sanitation Rules. If food preparation activities on the mobile unit generate grease or grease laden vapors, the commissary must have a grease trap in accordance with local requirements.
- 2- Operate from a permitted food service establishment (which may be a separately - owned business under the restrictions of 420-3-22-.09) with facilities to store food at the required temperatures, a toilet facility and, *except when all food is prepackaged*, fill potable water tanks, empty wastewater tanks, provide a handwashing sink, provide an appropriate warewashing sink and all required items of the Food Sanitation Rules. If food preparation activities on the mobile unit generate grease or grease laden vapors, the commissary must have a grease trap in accordance with local requirements.
- 3- Handwashing facility on-board the mobile unit; potable (drinking) water tank securely affixed on-board; waste water holding tank securely affixed on-board, 15% larger than the potable water tank; warm water (100°F) provided at all times in adequate amounts.
- 4- Three-compartment sink on-board with chemical test papers available and used.
- 5- Two-compartment sink on-board with chemical test papers provided and used.
- 6- Refrigeration/cold holding facilities on-board and/or facilities for hot holding food on-board, thermometers provided and used.
- 7- Four sets of food handling utensils, properly sanitized and prewrapped, on-board. (CHECK WITH THE LOCAL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT WHERE OPERATION IS PROPOSED TO VERIFY IF THIS OPTION IS ALLOWED).
- 8- Cooking facilities on-board, to include thermometers, water under pumped pressure to all sinks, sufficient ventilation to remove vapors and smoke from the cooking area, screens or effective forced air barriers, self closing doors, shielded lights, and smooth, non-absorbent, easily cleanable floors, walls, and ceilings.
- 9- Transport entire mobile unit to commissary daily.
- 10 - (For vehicles used for dispensing only raw fish or shrimp) Maintain product in direct contact with ice with meltwater contained until delivery is completed. Meltwater shall be disposed in a sanitary manner at the commissary or in accordance with law. Insulated containers and all necessary articles used for dispensing must be in an enclosed part of the vehicle, such as in a covered bed of a pick-up or inside a van. The commissary must have the capability to wash, rinse, and sanitize all food contact surfaces, and for cleaning the vehicle.