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MOBILE FOOD UNIT PLAN REVIEW AND PERMITTING GUIDE

GENERAL INFORMATION

This guide is an overview of mobile food units plan review and permit 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 units must be reviewed and approved by the Health Department in accordance with the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 246-215 and any existing mobile food unit policies and guidelines. In addition to this guide, please refer to WAC 246-215-121 Chapter 9 for specific requirements for mobile food units. Please note, the initial plan review process takes two weeks, although sometimes longer depending how complete, accurate, and legible the application is.

Mobile food unit (MFU) is defined as a readily movable self-contained food establishment that can be pushed, driven, or towed (without the removal of structural parts). When operating the MFU from a fixed location or on an established daily route it shall return to a commissary or servicing area on a daily basis or more often as necessary.

NOTICE: The Key Components a MFU applicant needs to consider prior to submitting an application are:

1. Checking with city/county planning or zoning department for requirements and restrictions.
2. Commercial grade equipment available for preparing, cooking, hot holding, and refrigeration for all foods.
3. Pressurized plumbing system with hot and cold water to serve a hand sink and other appropriate sinks.
4. A commissary agreement with a permitted food establishment equipped to support the MFU.

In essence, an MFU is a vehicle, trailer or pushcart used to transport, assemble, and serve food that has primarily been prepared by a food establishment or commissary. Unless regulated by city ordinances, there is no size limit to an MFU, although they must meet the following basic requirements or understanding prior to submitting any plans for approval.

- An MFU is not a restaurant. MFUs are recognized by this Health Department as a mode of vehicle built to receive and transport already prepared foods from an existing food establishment (commissary), then where food is commonly assembled on site while inside the MFU, and later served that same day 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 be permitted 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.
- MFU's shall be movable at all times during operation, meaning the MFU shall have inflated tires, be operable, and have no permanent connections to any public utility service (including water, sewer, electricity, and gas).
- Unless otherwise approved, the MFU shall be seen as one integral part. No outside equipment or accessories.

Until fully reviewed, approved, and permitted, the MFU may not operate in Thurston County

PLAN REVIEW APPLICATION INFORMATION

1. **FEES:** Despite the menu, size, or type of mobile food unit (MFU), all new operations require submission of MFU plan review fees.
 - The 2015 application and plan review fee is \$190.00 and covers 1.0 hour of plan review.
 - Plan reviews exceeding 1.0 hour is charged an additional \$190 per hour for plan review.
 - The annual MFU permit fee is risk based. Except for push carts, MFU's are considered high risk.
 - Any changes or additions to equipment, menu, or operation will require further plan review time and subject to additional plan review fees if necessary.
 - The plan review fee is NOT REFUNDABLE.

APPLICATION AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTATIONS: Complete the entire MFU application and include ALL relevant forms (i.e. food flow plan, equipment, site map/schedule, commissary and restroom agreements, water source, and waste water disposal verifications) that are provided. Please allow at least two weeks to complete the initial review. It's important to submit the application packet in its entirety to reduce the time and cost to complete the plan review. If all the requested information from the checklist is not included, it will delay the plan review and a letter will be sent requesting additional information. If we do not receive the additional information required, the plans will be denied and returned to the applicant.

MFU applications, including all necessary forms, are available on our website at www.thurstoncountywa.gov/departments/public-health-and-social-services/environmental-health/food-safety

HINT: *Prior to making any financial commitments or submitting any application packet to our office for review, we encourage you to review this guide carefully then schedule an appointment with us to discuss your ideas and ask any questions or concerns you may have about your project. The appointment may be scheduled for up to 30 minutes (at no cost) to answer any questions about your mobile food business. To make the meeting productive and beneficial, please have your questions prepared in advance.*

2. **MENU AND FOOD FLOW PLAN:** A complete menu (listing of foods) for your MFU operation shall be provided, along with a description of all food preparation steps (i.e. Food Flow Plan). MFU equipment requirements may vary depending on the menu items and food safety risks associated with preparation of certain foods. Mobile food units, with the exception of push carts, are routinely categorized as high risk.

MENU REQUIREMENTS:

- List all food and beverages to be served or given away. Include whether foods are packaged or how foods are dispensed or stationed on the MFU (i.e. condiments). It is the department's discretion to limit or restrict proposed menu item(s) if it is determined that the item(s) is not suitable to be served from an MFU.
- All food items used or sold shall be from an approved source. Upon request, vendor contact information or receipts shall be made available. **Use of foods and beverages (including condiments) prepared or stored in unapproved kitchens, garages, etc. is prohibited.**

- Use good judgment when deciding on a menu. Keep the menu simple.
- Purchasing a used MFU with all the equipment included or having one custom built, may lead to setbacks and/or disappointment. Be familiar with the menu and equipment needed prior to purchasing an MFU. Both the menu and the equipment on board must be a good match.
- Any menu changes shall be pre-approved by the health department. Failure to obtain prior approval for a menu change may result in closure of your MFU.

FOOD FLOW PLAN:

- Compared to restaurants or delis, Mobile food units (MFU) have limitations associated with them. Not all foods are suitable for MFU operations. Menu and preparation steps will be restricted. MFU's need to keep their menu items simple by reducing the number of food preparation steps. Multiple food preparation steps should only occur inside 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 what item(s) are prepared or cooked at the commissary and what food preparation steps will occur inside the MFU.
 - The food flow plan should confer how food is received, prepared, when/where it is made, how it is cooked, reheated, cold/hot holding, and how it is packaged or served to the customer. Also, discuss the handling of food after closing. Refer to enclosed example of a food flow plan.
 - **COOLING FOODS ON MFUs IS PROHIBITED.** Cooling is only allowed at the commissary.
3. **FLOOR PLAN, CONSTRUCTION DETAILS:** All MFUs are evaluated on an individual basis and design requirements may sometimes vary depending on the scope of the menu. The applicant/owner of an MFU must submit plans that illustrate the floor plan, finish schedule and overall dimensions of the MFU.

IT IS NOT ADVISABLE 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 COMPLIMENT EACH OTHER UNTIL BOTH HAVE BEEN REVIEWED.

Only submit complete, accurate, and legible plans that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide scaled drawing of the layout/floor plan of the MFU and the commissary. Include dimensions (length, width and height) of the MFU.

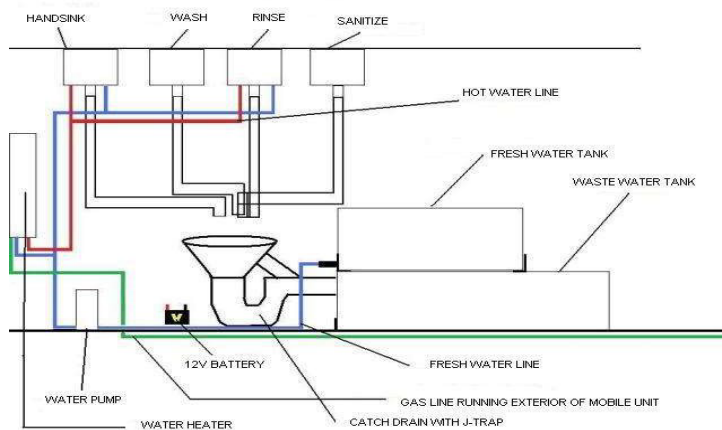
- Provide scaled elevation drawings of the sides, front and back view of the mobile food unit, including any storage compartment(s), equipment, displays, window(s), etc.
- Show layout of all equipment and supplies including cash registers, sinks, refrigerators, tanks, steam tables, grease hood, trash cans, storage compartments, shelves, grill, heater, fryers, etc.
- When designing a MFU, always think about cleaning practicability. As an example, when installing and securing down equipment (i.e. fryers, grills, tables, etc.) that are adjacent to one another, the equipment should be flushed and sealed OR provide enough clearance to easily clean in-between and under all of the equipment.
- Provide the finish schedule for the MFU's walls, ceiling, and floor. Materials shall be smooth, durable, nonabsorbent, and easy to clean and maintain. Bare or exposed wood is not allowed.
- 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. Barbecues must include a closing lid so overhead protection is not required.
- The MFU shall be constructed and arranged so that food, drink, utensils, paper products, and equipment will not be exposed to insects, dust, and other contaminants.
- Occupied MFU 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 operation.
- Provide as many electrical outlets as needed to avoid extension cords from hindering cleaning, preventing equipment power failure, and from cluttering the workspace 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. **Think of L&I as your “building department” for portable structures.** The applicant/owner shall provide documentation that L&I has approved and inspected your MFU before the health department can give final approval. Once approved, you will receive a decal from L&I, as pictured above to affix outside the MFU.

Washington Department of Labor and Industries can be contacted at 360-902-5799, through their website at <https://lni.wa.gov/> or writing Washington State Department of Labor and Industries P.O. Box 44810 Olympia, WA 98504-4810.

4. **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 to haul a push cart, proof of ownership or written permission of a vehicle capable to tow the MFU is also required.
5. **OTHER JURISDICTION AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:** Contact your city or county officials where you are proposing to operate the MFU so you can complete any applications for additional permits. Depending on jurisdictions, additional approval due to zoning requirements or other applicable ordinances may be required. Upon request, the MFU owner or applicant will need to provide documentation to the health department indicating they have jurisdiction approval to operate their MFU at their chosen location(s).
6. **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 hand washing all at one time.
 - Water pumps shall provide at least 10 p.s.i. Gravity water systems are not allowed on MFUs.
 - Fresh water must be from an approved source and the tank refilled thru a food-grade hose.
 - 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. Ideally, the freshwater tank should have a minimum 35 gallon capacity and 42 gallon capacity for wastewater. The number or types of sinks required is menu based.

- The wastewater holding tank must have at least **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.
- Multiple removable wastewater storage tanks adding up to the required storage tank size are not allowed. A single wastewater tank is required and must be an integral part of the MFU.



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

7. **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 list of all equipment. **Use the equipment list form provided.**
 - All equipment (including utensils, and pots) such as stoves, burners, BBQ's, grills, fryers, microwaves, refrigerators, hoods, blenders, espresso machines, steam tables, rotisseries, etc. must be commercial grade and have the certified NSF stamp or equivalent.
 - Residential (i.e. Maytag) or recreational (i.e. Coleman) type equipment shall not be used for MFUs when storing time or temperature control for safety (TCS) foods. An exception is allowed for restricted menu push carts with the use of ice chests for cold holding hotdogs and/or milk only.
 - All equipment and supplies must be stored within/on the MFU or in the commissary.
 - Refrigeration requirements are based on the menu. Adequate refrigerated storage must be available for the separation of TCS foods and ready-to-eat foods.

- Sufficient power (such as on site power or proper 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.
- Any equipment additions to the MFU shall require prior approval before installation.
- A hood is required if cooking equipment is installed, such as fryers, grills, rotisseries, etc.
- Additional sink requirements:
 - The MFU must provide a separate hand wash sink for employees that is accessible at all times of operation. Ideally, the sink size should be approximately 9 inches wide by 9 inches long and 5 inches deep. It shall be equipped with a mixing faucet capable of delivering a minimum of one gallon/minute, hot (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 inside a cabinet or draw, the sink must remain open during operation. If an MFU consists of an outside BBQ, then a separate hand wash sink shall be plumbed and installed outside the trailer or vehicle.
 - The operating procedure and menu will decide whether a three-compartment sink is required on the MFU, such as an MFU preparing any raw product(s). Pressurized hot and cold water to wash, rinse, and sanitize equipment must be available. To clean effectively, all utensils, pots, and pans must fit or be submerged in each sink compartment. Also, a drain board is required for drying equipment.
 - No automatic dishwashers unless combined with a three-compartment sink.
 - 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 at right).

8. **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 a 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 kitchen equipped to support all the needs of a MFU business.

Commissaries or servicing areas located outside of Thurston County may be accepted with the approval of the neighboring county health department. Servicing areas do not need to possess a health permit; however, a grocery store is an ideal business for a servicing area since cold storage may be allowed.

Working under a servicing area SHALL limit the menu and food preparation steps inside an MFU. The choice for either is primarily based on: the MFU design, menu items, site location, MFU equipment, MFU overnight storage, and lastly the Health Department's final approval. To satisfy the requirements for either type of facility, the following items shall be addressed and be in compliance with regulations:

- **Use of private residencies or homes as commissaries or servicing area is strictly prohibited.**
- Food and food contact supplies are not allowed to be stored in private vehicles.
- Include kitchen layout of commissary 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 permitted for any type of food preparation. Unless otherwise approved, only original sealed commercial dry food and paper products can be stored. The storage area must be clean protected from openings to the outside. If the servicing area is used for wastewater disposal or refilling freshwater tanks inside the MFU, then the location must be on public water and sewer OR be on an approved public water and sewer system.
- An MFU must be stored at their approved commissary, servicing area, or other approved location during non-operation times.
- If equipped with refrigeration and storing TCS food overnight, MFU's must demonstrate that their power supply is reliable and secured. If neither reliable nor secured, then all TCS foods shall be removed and stored at a commissary.
- 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 and signed by all parties and submitted with the application.
 - If the commissary/servicing area agreement expires or changes, then a new signed agreement letter is required in order to continue to operate. Commissary agreement forms shall be renewed each year with the annual permit and resubmitted.
9. **RESTROOM AGREEMENT, SITE MAP, SCHEDULE DETAILS:** When operating an MFU, the following logistics need to be addressed prior to the opening inspection:

RESTROOM AGREEMENT: If parked at any one 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 different locations for more than one hour. **Use restroom agreement form provided.** 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, the MFU operator must provide a key to allow customers access upon their request.

SITE MAP AND SCHEDULE: MFUs need to provide a site map and schedule as to their chosen location(s). It must include 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, multiple restroom agreements are required. Remember to always request an approval from the landowner and jurisdiction (i.e. city, county and/or private) prior to setting up to operate at a location. **Use the site map and schedule form provided.**

Updated site location(s) and itineraries must be provided to the health department for approval within 72 hours of change.

10. **OPERATING PROCEDURES:** This information is required to provide an outline of the MFU's daily activities and details. The following are a few activities or details that 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) Hours of operation (open to the public)
- 4) How and when the MFU will be moved
- 5) How and where freshwater 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) Outline closing procedures for the unit, including time returning the MFU 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

11. **WATER SOURCE AND WASTEWATER DISPOSAL:** Both water source and wastewater disposal approval is mandatory for a mobile food unit (MFU) to operate. **Use the verification forms provided.**

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 remember when connecting to a water system:

- The water source verification form is NOT required if the commissary or servicing area possess a valid food establishment permit and is used as their ONLY source of water supply for the MFU.
- Hoses used for filling freshwater tanks must be or be made of food-grade material. These are typically white or blue RV hoses.
- Provide a backflow device attached to the water spigot (faucet) when connecting the food grade filler hose to a public water source.

- 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 freshwater tanks cannot be used for draining or cleaning wastewater tanks.
- NO PERMANENT OR CONTINUOUS WATER PRESSURE CONNECTIONS TO ANY WATER SOURCE.
- Temporary water connections are NOT allowed except under special circumstances and conditions (i.e. attending public events for several days) and must be approved by the Health Department.

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 or consent of the wastewater purveyor.

If the commissary or servicing area will be connected on an onsite sewage system (a.k.a. septic system) for wastewater disposal, then the system must be reviewed and approved by the Health Department's Onsite Wastewater Program. This will be done in conjunction with the MFU plan review as part of the commissary or servicing area review. A few items to remember 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 hours of operation.
- NO PERMANENT CONNECTIONS TO ANY WASTEWATER DISPOSAL SYSTEMS.
- **Wastewater in holding tanks must be disposed of daily.** Tanks shall be sloped to drain into a one-inch hose in inner 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 and water heater capacity combined.
- If disposing waste water at more than one location, complete and provide additional Wastewater Verification forms and submit them to the health department.

IF THE APPROVED WATER SOURCE OR WASTEWATER SITE CHANGES FOR ANY REASON, PLEASE NOTIFY THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS:

- A. **MOBILE FOOD CART-** Mobile food carts, or in this guide referred to as push carts, are defined as a mobile food unit (MFU) that can be easily moved between locations by being pushed by a single person. These push carts are limited to serving only hot dogs, espresso, beverages and other non-TCS foods and thus considered low risk. THERE IS NO PREPARATION OR STORAGE OF TCS FOOD ALLOWED ON A MOBILE FOOD CART. The following list of items are a few specific requirements that mobile food carts must come into compliance with:
- 1) Push carts have several limitations and require specific requirements to operate. If the pushcart requires several people to push it, then it may be classified as a higher risk MFU designed for food preparation and regulated under those requirements.
 - 2) The only meat product allowed is hotdogs. No other processed meats are allowed.
 - 3) The only hot holding condiments allowed for hotdogs will be canned 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 the business day.
 - 4) Condiments not in individual packages need to be provided in dispenser bottles or in other containers protected from contamination.
 - 5) All preparation, packaging, or portioning of non-TCS foods (i.e. plastic wrapped muffins) must be done at the commissary.
 - 6) 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.
 - 7) 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 a connected part to the pushcart. There shall be a few inches of ice on all sides and bottom of the food to maintain 41°F or less. A thermometer shall be secured to an upper inside wall. Ice chest used for this purpose must have a built-in drain and plumbed to drain into a wastewater tank
 - 8) The only external component that may accompany the pushcart is one ice chest for cold storing beverages (i.e. soda, water, etc.) It is acceptable to store unopened milk containers for espresso or sealed hotdog packages.
 - 9) Unless otherwise approved, no additional grills, tables, etc. to support the pushcart.

- 10) Ice used for beverages must be separate from ice used for storing cold food.
- 11) Overhead protection (i.e. umbrella, etc.) is required. With inclement weather, such as heavy winds and rain, pushcart are to close due to insufficient protection.
- 12) 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.
- 13) Food products and supplies must be stored on the pushcart or in the commissary.
- 14) A three-compartment sink is not required for push carts; however, the operator shall provide a sufficient number of utensils (i.e. tongs).
- 15) 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.
- 16) 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 all hours of operation. Hand sinks are not to be used for storage or cleaning.
- 17) At the beginning or end of the business day, the pushcart shall be returned to the commissary or servicing area for cleaning, wastewater disposal, potable water refilling, and restocking, etc.
- 18) There are size constrictions for push carts. Contact your city planning officials.

B. MOBILE CATERING FOOD UNIT WITH PREPACKAGED FOOD- Also referred to as a “lunch truck” is a vehicle approved to transport and sell prepackaged food(s) and beverages which are commonly self- served. Food preparation is not allowed on these types of MFUs and thus considered low risk. The following list of items are specific requirements catered around these types of mobile food units:

- 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 (i.e. sandwiches) must be kept at 41°F or less while cold holding, or 140°F or above while hot holding on the vehicle. Cold holding potentially hazardous foods shall be displayed in mechanical commercial refrigerator (i.e. NSF). Mechanical refrigeration must be powered by propane, electricity, or generator.
- 3) All food equipment used on the vehicle shall be of commercial grade quality.
- 4) Ice bins used to store non-potentially hazardous foods shall have an interior surface that is smooth, cleanable, durable, and have a drain to a wastewater tank.

- 5) Reheating for hot holding is only allowed for pre-packaged foods that have been processed in a facility under Washington State Department of Agriculture, FDA, or USDA inspection.
- 6) Handsinks are not required on the vehicle as long as there are no open food products or packages prepared or handled by the operator during hours of operation.
- 7) Thermometers must be in all refrigerator units and hot holding units. Pre-chilling and preheating shall be done at the commissary prior to loading food in the units.
- 8) Open food product is not allowed. The operator cannot open food packages or handle unwrapped food. Keep all foods protected during hours of operation.
- 9) Microwaves are allowed on these types of vehicles, but only the customer can open the packages and reheat their food in the microwave.
- 10) All prepackaged foods must be properly labeled and come from an approved source.
- 11) All food products and supplies shall be stored on the mobile catering unit or in the commissary or servicing area. Keep all food protected from dust, insects, etc.
- 12) Condiments not in individual packages are provided in dispenser bottles or in other containers protected from contamination.
- 13) 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 operating procedures satisfy our requirements as a mobile catering food unit.
- 14) At the end of the business day, the MFU shall return to the commissary/servicing area for daily cleaning, wastewater disposal, potable water refilling, and restocking, etc.
- 15) The MFU storage 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 perishable foods shall be removed and stored in a commissary.**

C. MOBILE FOOD UNITS PREPARING FOOD- A vehicle or trailer that is serving food in a mobile food unit (MFU) may serve non-potentially hazardous foods or may do LIMITED preparation of potentially hazardous foods. Limited preparation means the menu is simplified to reduce complex steps; thus, reducing the risk factors. Unless otherwise approved, these types of MFU are permitted as high risk.

NOTE: *The types of menus we advise on MFU's are those that are prepared, processed, cooked, and cooled at an approved commissary. Then, the food is transferred to the MFU for hot or cold holding to later be served. MFU's involving more complex menu with multiple preparation steps inside the MFU may experience an extensive plan review and may be subject to menu limitations.*

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, chopping lettuce, cutting tomatoes, slicing or trimming meat, making soup, making dough balls, roasting, preparing dough, cooking and cooling beans, cooking ground beef, washing vegetables, and marinating, etc.
- 2) Commercial grade mechanical refrigeration is required for ALL potentially hazardous foods. The size of the refrigerator may vary depending on the menu and operating procedures; size your refrigerator carefully so that it does not limit your capability.
- 3) Potentially hazardous foods prepared on the MFU shall be served the same day they are prepared. Any leftover potentially hazardous food that was hot held in the MFU shall be discarded at the end of the business day.
- 4) Food on MFU may not be reheated more than once and NO COOLING is allowed.
- 5) Food processed at an approved food processing plant inspected by WSDA, FDA or USDA shall be reheated, for hot holding, to 140°F within one hour while on the MFU.
- 6) Prior to use, all mechanical equipment shall be preheated or pre-chilled at the commissary. Thermometers must be provided inside cold and hot holding units.
- 7) With exception to barbecues and generators, there shall be no additional equipment, storage devices, accessories, etc., outside the MFU. The barbecue shall be in close proximity to the MFU. There shall be no processing, portioning, preparation, or assembly of food next to the barbecue. Provide a security barrier around the barbecue area during hours of operation.
- 8) Cooking raw meat on the MFU is restricted to thin foods, such as hamburger patties, steaks, chicken portions, sausages, etc. **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. 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.
- 9) 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 menu items from any raw product(s).
- 10) 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 if installing a ventilation system.

- 11) Condiments not in individual packages are provided in dispenser bottles or in other containers protected from contamination.
- 12) At the end of the business day, the MFU shall return to the commissary/servicing area for daily cleaning, wastewater disposal, freshwater refill, and restocking, etc.
- 13) The MFU storage 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 perishable foods shall be removed and stored in a commissary.**

PRE-OPENING INSPECTION AND FINAL APPROVAL/PERMITTING PROCESS:

Once the plans have been approved and the mobile food unit (MFU) is ready for pre-inspection, the applicant and/or owner must see that the following items have been addressed accordingly:

- Contact the Health Department to schedule a pre-opening inspection of the completed MFU at least 7 days in advance.
- Pre-opening inspections require the MFU to be brought to the Health Department or the commissary location for inspection.
- The MFU must be completely ready for use. This means all equipment is in place and operable; including, but not limited to refrigerators (pre-chill in advance), hot holding, lights, hood, pumps, hot water heater, hand soap/paper towels are on hand, handwash sign posted, and all construction debris and materials removed. Note: Electrical service is not provided at the Health Department.
- 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). Service to the refrigerator may be required if the condition and low temperature warrant it.
- Provide a food grade filling hose (i.e. white or blue RV hose), together with a backflow device with an approved protective cover or device provided for the water inlet and outlet to the filling hose.
- If unsure about site location(s) and accessibility to restrooms during the plan review stage, this information must be provided at the time of the pre-opening inspection or prior to issuing a permit.
- The business name of the MFU must be displayed clearly on the customer side of the MFU.

- If the MFU can be occupied, then the MFU must have an L&I decal affixed and visible on the outside.
- The MFU must be registered by DMV. If the MFU is a trailer or pushcart, then the owner(s) of the trailer shall provide DMV records or a letter of permission indicating they have ownership or access to a tow vehicle that is capable of towing the MFU.
- All surfaces 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 in areas where cleaning is already difficult due to lack of accessibility or the inability to maneuver equipment to clean around.
- Provide restroom and commissary agreements and site location/schedule for the file.
- 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.
- Once ALL the fees have been paid, the operating permit will be mailed to the mailing address noted on the application or you may pick it up. Please post the permit inside the MFU so that it is visible on the customer side of the vehicle, trailer or pushcart.

Once permitted, the MFU is approved to operate in all pre-approved areas throughout Thurston County. A few key points to remember prior to operating:

- 1) Remain movable at all times. Parking the MFU with no plans to relocate or return daily to the commissary or servicing area will not be acceptable.
- 2) Update your site location(s) / itineraries and restroom agreement(s) if there are any changes.
- 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 are no additional equipment, add-ons or accessories outside the MFU.
- 5) If there were any pre-opening conditions noted on the 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 at the approved commissary on file.

The intent of this guide is to assist the MFU applicant or owner to better identify and understand MFU application requirements and expectations of them upon opening and operating their mobile food business. Keep in mind, 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:

<https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/4400/FoodCodeRuleRevision-Summary.pdf>

To request this document in an alternative format, please contact the Food and Environmental Section.

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