



# Chatham County Public Health Department Division of Environmental Health

## MOBILE FOOD UNIT — GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

➤ **The following information is provided as an overview of mobile food unit requirements. It is not a complete list of requirements. For complete information please see the current *Food Sanitation Rules* as they apply to your mobile food unit. Copies are available online at: [www.chathamnc.org/environmentalhealth](http://www.chathamnc.org/environmentalhealth)**

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Mobile Food Unit:** Any vehicle that is self-propelled or that can be pulled or pushed down a sidewalk, street, highway or waterway, on which food is prepared, processed, or converted or which is used in selling and dispensing food to customers. Mobile food units must be capable of being mobile at all times during operation. The wheels of the unit may not be removed from the unit at the operating location. Most mobile food units require a commissary for rapidly cooling foods, food washing, overnight storage, and dishwashing facilities.

A **Commissary** is equivalent to a restaurant (by Rule). The purpose of the commissary is to service the mobile food unit for such things such as dishwashing, handwashing, cooking, cold holding, cooling, storage, etc. A commissary must meet general restaurant requirements; please contact this office for further information.

A **pushcart** is a mobile food unit that is designed to readily move and vend food.

**TYPES OF MOBILE FOOD UNITS**

**Tier I-** operations that meet the requirements of a pushcart per 15A NCAC 18A.2671 (a) Only hot dogs shall be prepared, handled, or served from a pushcart; however, food which has been prepared, pre-portioned and individually pre-wrapped at a food handling establishment or commissary may be served from the cart.

**Tier II-** operations that meet the requirements of a mobile food unit per 15A NCAC 18A.2672. These units may have a menu limited to items that are pre-portioned, ready to assemble and/or cook. All preparation, portioning is completed at commissary not on the unit. For example: BBQ that is shredded and ready to reheat, vegetables that are all sliced ready to cook or assemble, fish that is ready to be breaded and cooked. Permit may specify the restrictions

**Tier III-** operations that meet the requirements of a mobile food unit per 15A NCAC 18A.2672. These units have a menu that limits food preparation based on availability of preparation sinks at commissary and on unit. Permit may specify these conditions

**Tier IV-** operations that meet the requirements of a mobile food unit per 15A NCAC 18A.2672 and will be permitted as a mobile food commissary.

**Requirement:**

Mobile food units must use water from an approved water supply and be designed to provide a sufficient capacity to meet needs.

	Tier I	Tier II	Tier III	Tier IV
<b>Water Required</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Water Capacity</b>	Consult with EH office	A minimum of 5 gallons of water must be provided for handwashing. Must have 5 gallons of water for hand washing per operational hour  If there is dishwashing on the unit, a minimum of 30 gallons or more of water <b>must</b> be available for dishwashing.	The system must be of sufficient capacity to furnish enough hot and cold water for food preparation, dishwashing, and handwashing. A minimum of five gallons of water is required for handwashing and at least 30 additional gallons of water is required for dishwashing plus water for food products.	The system <b>must</b> be of sufficient capacity to furnish enough hot and cold water for food preparation, dishwashing, and handwashing.  A minimum of five gallons of water is required for handwashing and at least 30 additional gallons of water is required for dishwashing plus water for food products.

Materials used in the construction of mobile food unit water tanks and plumbing must be made of safe (food or drinking water grade) materials. A mobile food units' water tank inlet must be 3/4 inch in inner diameter or less and provided with a hose connection of a size or type that will prevent its use for any other service. A backflow prevention device must be installed at one hose connection bib to prevent backflow into the clean water system. A cap and keeper chain, closed cabinet, closed storage tube, or other approved protective cover or device must be provided for a water inlet, outlet, and hose. Water tanks must be filled with potable water with a food grade hose. A control valve is needed between the fresh water tank and fixtures.

All hot water and steam generating equipment must be equipped with an approved temperature and pressure relief valve constructed and installed in compliance with the NC Plumbing Code.

3. **Sewage Disposal:** All liquid wastes must drain into an approved wastewater tank. All liquid waste from the waste tank or from cleaning activities such as cleaning the mobile food unit must be captured and properly disposed of in the sanitary sewer. Wastewater can not be dumped onto the ground, onto the streets, or into a storm a drain.
4. **Water and Sewage Tanks:** Mobile food units must be designed with built-in potable (clean water) and waste water tanks on board the unit except for pushcart units that only provide gravity flow hand washing systems. The mobile food unit may connect to water and sewer if it is available at the operating location; however, the tanks must remain on the unit at all times. Mobile food units connected to water must also be connected to sewer.  
Mobile food unit waste water tanks must be at least 15% larger in capacity than the water supply tank and sloped to a drain that is one inch in inner diameter or greater, equipped with a shut-off valve. All connections on the mobile food unit for servicing the mobile food unit waste disposal facilities must be of a different size or type than those used for supplying potable water to the mobile food unit.
5. **Power Source:** Mobile food unit must have an appropriate power source (*e.g.*, generator or plugged into an electrical source) to ensure food sanitation requirements are met at all hours of operation including during transport to operation site(*e.g.*, provide proper cold holding, hot holding, and meet handwashing and dishwashing hot water requirements).
6. **Hot Water:** Hot water generation and distribution systems must be sufficient to meet the peak hot water demands for handwashing facilities, dishwashing, and other operations of the mobile food unit.
7. **Handwashing Facilities:** The location of handwashing facilities must be convenient and readily accessible to all operations. Mobile food units must have plumbed handwashing facilities with water under pressure.  
**The use of handwashing facilities is restricted to handwashing only.**
8. **Dishwashing:** All utensils and equipment must be washed in a 3-compartment sink (capable of washing the largest utensil) or commercial dishwasher. If it is not practical to wash utensils and equipment on board, then an approved commissary may be used. Mobile food units that do not have onboard dishwashing must have enough utensils so that clean utensils are provided every two hours. However, the mobile unit must still have a single compartment dish sink.
9. **Indirect Waste:** Any piece of equipment utilized to hold food or ice that is equipped with a drain must have indirect waste plumbing. Where air gaps are required, the distance between the bottom of the waste pipe and top of the drain must be at least one inch or two waste pipe diameters.

10. **Restrooms:** Restroom facilities must be available for use at the site of the mobile food unit operation. It is recommended that restroom facilities should be available within a 1/4 mile, or a maximum five minute walk, of the mobile food unit and be available for use during all mobile food unit operating hours. Mobile food units that use portable toilets must have handwashing available at the portable toilet.
11. **Cold Holding:** Adequate refrigeration must be provided to ensure potentially hazardous foods are held at 41°F. Each refrigeration unit must be equipped with either a built-in thermometer or be provided with a numerically scaled spirit stem thermometers accurate to  $\pm 2^\circ\text{F}$  or  $\pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ . Thermometers must be located to measure the air temperature in the warmest part of the refrigerator and located in an area where the thermometer is easy to read.
12. **Hot Holding:** Adequate equipment to hold hot potentially hazardous food at or above 135°F (60°C) must be provided.
13. **Rapid Cooling:** The best way to keep food safe is to make it fresh each day, just before you serve it. If you have food that is leftover or made in advance, you must cool this food rapidly at the approved commissary with equipment designed for rapidly cooling foods. Food must be cooled from 135°F to 70°F within two hours and from 70°F to 41°F within the next four hours. *EH office may approve cooling of foods as a condition on the unit's food service permit.*
14. **Rapid Reheating:** Potentially hazardous food that has been cooked, cooled, and reheated for hot holding must be reheated within two hours to a temperature of at least 165°F (74°C) for 15 seconds. Potentially hazardous food reheated in a microwave for hot holding must be reheated so that all parts of the food reach a temperature of at least 165°F (74°C) and allowed to stand covered for two minutes. Ready-to-eat food from a commercially processed package must be heated to at least 135°F (60°C).
15. **Probe Thermometer:** A metal stem probe thermometer measuring from 0°F to 220°F must be available to check internal food holding temperatures and must be accurate. A small diameter, tip sensitive probe thermometer is required to check to measure the temperature of thin foods.
16. **Date Marking:** Ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods that will not be used within a day must be date marked with either the preparation date, use-by date, or date the commercial package was open. Date marked food stored at 41°F (5°C) or colder may be stored for up to seven days before it must be discarded.
17. **Storage:** Adequate storage equipment is required to assure that all food, food containers, and single service utensils are stored at least six inches above the floor, or on a four inch high platform (or wheeled platforms). Storage shelves must be smooth, impervious, and easily cleanable. Food may not be stored in areas such as under sinks with exposed or unprotected sewer lines or water lines. Toxic items must be stored and labeled to allow for proper use and prevent contamination of food and food contact surfaces.
18. **Produce:** Produce must be washed at the approved commissary in a veggie prep sink.
19. **Equipment:** All equipment should be easy to clean and maintained in good repair. All metal equipment should be free of rust and corrosion. Rusty/corroded metal equipment should be replaced or refinished in an approved manner. Wooden surfaces must be finished to provide a washable surface. All stationary equipment should be installed to allow easy cleaning beneath and/or behind equipment.

20. **Self-Service:** Self-service foods within customer reach that are not prepackaged must be protected from customer contamination by a sneeze shield or other approved means. Condiments such as ketchup containers and salsas must be dispensed to protect foods from contamination. Condiments must be dispensed from the mobile food unit.
21. **Ventilation:** Adequate ventilation is required to prevent grease or condensation from collecting on walls and ceilings. Equipment specification sheet for hood system on the unit must be approved to remove grease laden vapors in commercial food service applications.
22. **Wall, Floor, and Overhead Protection:** Floors, walls, and ceilings must be finished, smooth, and easily cleanable. All outer openings must be protected to prevent the entrance of insects, rodents, and contamination from weather elements.
23. **Lighting:** Adequate lighting must be provided. Light bulbs must be shielded or shatter resistant.
24. **Doors and Windows:** Exterior doors must be rodent proof (clearance may not exceed 1/4 inch and should be as tight-fitting as possible). All openings to the outer air must be screened to prevent fly entry.
25. **Employee Personal Items:** Employee personal items such as jackets, purses, medicines, etc., must be stored separately from food preparation areas and in a manner to prevent contamination.
26. **Garbage Disposal:** Must be disposed of at an approved, sanitary garbage disposal site or at base of operations. Garbage facilities at the base of operations must be located in an area with a hard, nonabsorbent surface such as cement or asphalt. Outside containers must be covered and adequately sized.
27. **Certified Food Protection Manager:** The person in charge of food handling on the mobile unit must have completed and passed a NC certified food safety managers certification course within 210 days of food service permit issuance.
28. **Route Information:** The Chatham County Environmental Health office at (919)542-8208, must be notified when any mobile food unit change is made pertaining to menu change, route change, change in mobile food unit vehicle used or layout, change in location of base of operations, or change in hours of operation.
29. **LP gas inspection:** The NCDA Standards Section inspects gas lines on all mobile units. A NCDA gas inspection report will be required prior to food service permit issuance. Contact NCDA at (919)707-3225.