



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

## HEALTH DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES TO OPERATE MOBILE FOOD SERVICE UNIT

These guidelines are provided to educate citizens on requirements and sanitation standards for mobile food vending. The guidelines should be used as supplement to The Food and Food Handling Code, and do not supersede compliance with Chapter 43.1.

### 1. DEFINITIONS

**Base of Operation:** establishment in which food and related equipment, utensils, containers and supplies are stored, labeled, prepared, packaged and cleaned. The base of operation must have a valid Fairfax County Health Department permit. If the base of operation is not located in Fairfax County, a copy of the permit issued by the governing regulatory authority shall be required.

**Potentially Hazardous Food:** any food that consists in whole or in part of milk or milk products, eggs, meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, edible crustacean or other ingredients, including synthetic ingredients, in a form capable of supporting the rapid and progressive growth of infectious or toxigenic microorganisms.

**Packaged:** means bottled, canned, cartoned, securely bagged, or securely wrapped. Packaged does not include a wrapper, carryout box, or other non-durable container or containerize food with the purpose of facilitating food protection during service and receipt of the food by the consumer.

**Labeling:** means food packaged in a Food Establishment are to be labeled with the following information in accordance with Section 3-602.11 of the Food Code:

- 1) The common name of the food, or absent of a common name and adequately descriptive statement;
- 2) If made from two or more ingredients, a list of the ingredients in descending order of predominance by weight, including a declaration of artificial color or flavor and chemical preservatives if contained in the food;
- 3) An accurate declaration of the quantity of contents;
- 4) The name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor; and
- 5) Except as exempted in the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act subsection 403(q)(3)-(5), nutrition labeling as specified in 21 CFR 1001 – Food labeling and 9 CFR 317 Subpart B Nutrition Labeling.

**Permit Holder:** means the entity that:

- a) Is legally responsible for the operation of the Food Establishment such as the owner, the owner's agent, or other person\*; and
- b) Possesses a valid permit to operate a food establishment

\*A **person** includes an association, a corporation, individual, partnership, other legal entity, government, or governmental subdivision or agency.



**Mobile food service operations are of two distinct types:**

**Type I (a)**

**Pushcarts:** a mobile food unit that is readily moveable (cart or trailer) and offers ready-to-eat foods such as hotdog and frankfurter type foods and canned or bottled drinks.



**Type I (b) – Limited Mobile Food Service Unit- No Cooking or Food Preparation**

Units with “packaged” food items or non-potentially hazardous food (no cooking).



**Type II - Mobile Food Service Unit**

Units with food preparation or cook-on service.



## 2. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Plans shall be provided to the Health Department, by any person intending to construct, remodel, obtain a new permit, or convert a vehicle or trailer into a mobile food unit in Fairfax County. Applicant must submit two copies of plans to the Health Department for review and approval plus a plan review fee of \$40.00 for each vehicle or trailer. Plans must be drawn to scale (e.g. 1/4" = 1 ft.) on 8 1/2 x 11 inches or larger white paper with dark ink only, blue prints, or any other standard floor plans. The plans must show top schematic view of equipment layout, proposed equipment types and model numbers, construction materials, finishes, and side view of electrical and plumbing installations. Additional information may be required by the Health Department for proper review of the proposed construction, conversion or modification, and procedures for operating a mobile food unit.
2. After the applicant's plans have been reviewed and stamped approved, one set of approved plans will be returned to the applicant. Upon receipt of the approval notification, applicants may proceed with construction, remodeling, or conversion. Upon completion, or when the mobile food unit is in compliance, the applicant may schedule a pre-operational inspection. Pre-operational inspections are conducted by appointment only between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday. The mobile food unit must be clean and all equipment including refrigerators, steam tables, sinks, vent hoods, and water heaters must be operating at the time of inspection.
3. To schedule a pre-operational inspection, you will be required to complete an application for a food service permit and pay the permit fee of \$40.00. Also, a Certified Food Manager is to be present at the time of the pre-operational inspection. Once the pre-operational inspection is conducted and all construction and equipment requirements are met and approved, a permit and decal will be issued.
4. If your mobile unit is operating at a fixed location within Fairfax County for more than 30 days, you will require a Fairfax County business license. Application for the Fairfax County business license can be obtained at the following location:

***Department of Tax Administration***  
***12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 223***  
***703-222-8234***

5. Application for a Food Vendor's license can be obtained at the following location:  
***Department of Cable Communication and Consumer Protection***  
***Licensing Division***  
***12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 127***  
***703-324-5966/5943***

## 3. COMPLIANCE AND REQUIREMENTS

Each mobile food unit shall be in compliance with all of the following items before operation and permit issuance:

1. Provide a signed agreement with an approved base of operation at the time of pre-operational inspection. A copy of the base of operation permit must also be provided at this time. The mobile food truck shall report at least daily to such location for supplies, cleaning, and service operations. The Health Department will periodically review the daily log of reporting to the base of operation.

2. The mobile food operator must possess a Northern Virginia Food Manager Certificate (CFM card). A Limited Food Manager Certificate (LCFM card) is required if only “*packaged*” foods and hot-dog-type foods are served and a Food Manager Certificate (CFM card) is required if potentially hazardous foods are prepared and served.
3. Each applicant shall submit a proposed menu listing of all of the food and beverage items to be offered from the mobile food unit.
4. Each mobile food unit shall be fabricated to exclude vermin, dust, dirt, splash, and spillage encountered under normal use, and shall be easily cleaned, maintained, and serviced. Protect service-out windows against fly entrance by an approved sliding screen, window or a mechanical air curtain over windows. Design shall minimize the potential for cross-contamination.
5. Equipment must be constructed of approved material, adequate in size, easily cleanable and in good repair. Equipment design, construction and installation must meet American National Standard Institute (ANSI) such as National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) or equivalent. The use of household refrigerators, stoves, sinks, vent hoods, and other equipment are not permitted.
6. Surfaces of walls, floors and ceilings must be constructed of smooth, nonabsorbent, easily cleanable materials that are light in color.
7. Provide an exhaust ventilation hood system with at least 6" overlap on all open sides beyond the edge of the cooking equipment. Hood design and volume of air to be exhausted must be in accordance with the latest edition of the Uniform Mechanical Code. The exhaust ventilation hood system shall be designed to prevent grease or condensation from draining or dripping onto food, equipment, utensils, linens, and single-service and single use articles.
8. A solid door or wall partition must be provided between the food preparation compartment and the driver's cab area. Trailer concessions (non-self-propelled) are exempt. The driver's compartment must not be used for storage.
9. All light fixtures shall be shielded or provided with shatter resistant bulbs.
10. An adequate supply of hot and cold water under pressure must be provided and piped to the three compartment sink and the hand sink. The three compartment sink shall be of adequate size to wash, rinse and sanitize utensils and equipment. The three compartment sink must have integral drain boards (right and left). Hand soap and paper towels shall be provided at the hand sink.
11. The water supply tank inlet and outlet fittings for filling and draining the water tank must be enclosed and protected from contamination from dust, etc. The inlet shall be 19.1mm (3/4 inch) in diameter or less and shall be provided with a hose connection of a size that will prevent its use for any other source. The inlet and outlet shall be sloped to drain.

12. A sewage holding tank must be installed to collect waste water and must be sized 15% larger in capacity than the water supply tank. The holding tank shall be sloped to a drain that is 25mm (1 inch) or greater and equipped with a shut off valve.
13. All connections on the vehicle for servicing mobile food unit waste disposal facilities shall be of different sizes or types than those used for supplying potable water to the mobile food unit. The waste connection shall be located lower than the potable water inlet connection to preclude contamination of the potable water system.
14. The water heater shall be of adequate capacity and shall be capable of furnishing a continuous supply of hot water whenever the vehicle is in operation. The water heater shall have a minimum capacity of six gallons.
15. Provide an NSF approved water hose designed for drinking water use only. This hose is to be used only to fill the fresh water tank. Store hose on the vehicle with ends fastened together.
16. Mechanical refrigeration must be provided and be of adequate capacity. Refrigeration units are to be design to cool food items to an internal temperature of 41°F or lower.
17. Hot holding equipment, if required, must be able to maintain hot food items at an internal temperature of 140°F or above.
18. Provide at least one metal stem type dial thermometer.
19. Provide chemical test strips to monitor the concentration of the sanitizer.
20. All food preparation including grilling, barbecuing, cooking, displaying, serving, and storage must be done **inside** the mobile food unit.
21. No permit or decal is transferable from person-to-person, vehicle-to-vehicle, place-to-place or from the type of operation specified in the application to another.
22. The regulatory authority may impose additional requirements to protect against a health hazard related to the operation of the mobile food unit and may prohibit the sale of some or all potentially hazardous foods until no health hazard will result.
23. In addition, all mobile food units must comply with the Fairfax County Food and Food Handling Code (Chapter 43.1) and are subject to inspections at any time. Mobile food units operating from a base of operation that is not permitted by the Fairfax County Health Department must submit a letter/agreement from the owner of the base of operation and a copy of the permit issued by the governing regulatory authority.
24. Under no circumstances will customers be permitted to serve themselves.
25. **FOOD SOURCE:** food must be prepared and packaged and labeled in an approved food service or food processing facility.

### **3. Base of Operation**

A base of operation must be provided where trucks can be cleaned and serviced and where potable water can be obtained and sewage and other liquid waste can be discarded.

1. All mobile food truck operators shall provide a base of operation letter. The letter shall state that the mobile food unit has permission to utilize their facilities as necessary to support the operation of the mobile food unit. The contract or letter must bear the original signature of the base of operations owner/operator. This requirement may be waived for limited service mobile food units.
2. The base of operation must have a valid Fairfax County Health Department permit. A truck operating from a base of operation not under Fairfax County jurisdiction must submit a letter from the governing jurisdiction stating that its base of operation is satisfactory and is under a regular inspection program.
3. An adequate supply of hot and cold running water for cleaning and sanitizing food handling articles shall be available at all times.
4. All equipment used in conjunction with a mobile unit operation shall be thoroughly cleaned at the base of operation at the end of each day of operation.
5. The wastewater tank on the mobile unit shall be emptied and cleaned **ONLY** at the base of operation. Proper drains shall be provided at the site for this purpose. Adequate trash containers shall be provided for disposal of trash and food wastes.
6. Adequate sanitary storage space shall be provided for supplies and equipment.
7. An approved hood system must be available for the preparation and cooking of grease laden food.
8. Approved toilet and lavatory facilities shall be provided.