

Mobile Food Units (MFU): How to Mobilize Your Food Operation Under DSHS

Definition:

According to Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER), a MFU is a vehicle mounted, self or otherwise propelled, self-contained food service operation, designed to be readily moveable (including, but not limited to catering trucks, trailers, push carts, and roadside vendors) and used to store, prepare, display, serve or sell food. Mobile units must completely retain their mobility at all times. A Mobile Food Unit does not mean a stand or a booth. A roadside food vendor and pushcart may be licensed as MFUs. [228.2(85)]

Mobile Food Unit



Pushcart



Roadside Vendor



These special provisions, along with TFER references, shall be met before operating:

Establishment:

- The MFU shall be mobile at all times [#30, 228.221 (a)(1) and (3)];
- Like a fixed establishment, the MFU shall be enclosed;
- Shall be protected from entry of pests with tight-fitting doors and windows [#34, 228.174(e)(1)(B) – (C)];
- Walls and ceilings shall be smooth, easily cleanable, and light in color [#45, 228.173(a), (f)(3)];
- Walls and ceilings shall protect against entry of rodents and insects [#34, 228.174(e)(1)(A)];
- Screens (i.e. at ventilation points or windows) shall be at least 16 mesh to 1-inch [#34, 228.174(e)(4)(A)];
- Exterior surfaces shall be of weather-resistant materials [#45, 228.172(b)];
- Pushcarts do not need to be enclosed, but do need overhead protection;
- Roadside vendors do not need to be enclosed.

Smooth and cleanable surfaces



Water:

- Water (hot and cold) under pressure supplied to all sinks permanently installed (this requirement does not apply to roadside food vendors) [228.221(a)(7)];
- Water supply must meet the demands of the operation [#23, 228.143(a) – (c)];
- Potable water tank and fill hose shall be permanently installed, labeled as “potable water” and provided with a ¾-inch or less inlet connection [#32 OR #37, 228.221(a)(8)(A)-(C)];
- Waste retention tank for liquid waste must be 15% larger than the potable water tank, leak proof, and be permanently installed [#44, 228.221(a)(9)(A)-(B)(i)];
- Waste retention tank (labeled as “waste water”) shall be sloped to a drain that is 1 inch in inner diameter and equipped with a shut-off valve [#44, 228.221(a)(9)(B)(ii), (G)];
- Liquid waste connections shall be different in size and type than potable water [#44, 228.221(a)(9)(C)];
- These requirements also apply to pushcarts. They do not apply to roadside vendors [228.221(a)(10)(A)].

Potable Water Tank



Liquid Waste Connection



Potable Water Inlet



Equipment:

- Equipment should be adequate to maintain hot and cold Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods at required temperatures (41°F or below for cold foods; 135°F or above for hot foods) [#27, 228.221(a)(6)(A)];
- Food contact surfaces of equipment including tables and counters shall be durable, corrosion-resistant and non-absorbent [#32, 228.101(a)(2)];
- MFU’s shall only provide single service articles to consumers [#40, 228.221(a)(5)].

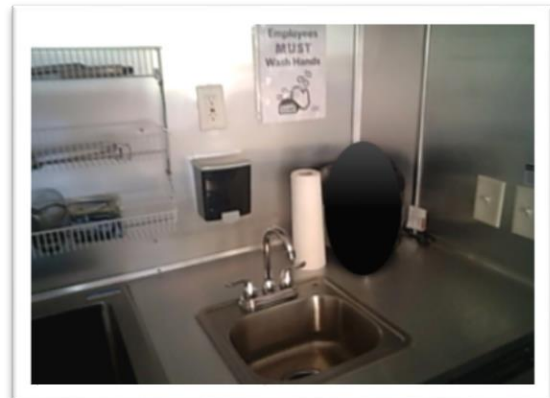
Manual Warewashing and Handwash Sinks:

- At least one handwash sink supplied with soap and hand drying device [#31, 228.221(a)(6)(C)];
- A sink with three compartments for washing, rinsing, and sanitizing of equipment and utensils, along with drain boards for soiled and clean items [#33, 228.221(a)(6)(B)(i)];
- The three compartments must be large enough to submerge the largest utensil or piece of equipment [#33, 228.221(a)(6)(B)(ii)];
- Hot and cold water shall be supplied to all sinks under pressure [#23, 228.143(a)];
- Roadside vendors do not require sinks.

Three-compartment sink



Handwash sink



Restrooms:

- A MFU does not need to be equipped with a restroom;
- Toilet rooms shall be designated and be conveniently located and accessible to employees during all hours of operation [#46, 228.221(a)(11)];

Central Preparation Facility (CPF):

- The MFU shall operate from a CPF or other fixed establishment and shall report to such location for supplies and for cleaning and servicing operations [#45, 228.221(b)(1)];
- The CPF is an approved retail food establishment at which food is prepared, stored, and wrapped; the MFU is supplied with fresh water and ice; wastewater and other liquids are properly disposed; food-contact surfaces or items not capable of being immersed in the MFU utensil-washing sink are cleaned and sanitized [228.2(15)];
- The operator must maintain the most recent inspection of the CPF on the unit at all times [#47, 228.221(a)(4)(C)];
- If the CPF or servicing area is not owned by the MFU operator, then a signed letter of authorization is required [#47, 228.221(a)(4)(B),(D)];

- Use of a private residence as a CPF is prohibited. [#7, 228.174(k)]

Servicing Area:

- A servicing area is a location an MFU shall return regularly for such things as vehicle cleaning, discharging liquid or solid wastes, refilling water tanks and ice bins, and boarding food. No food preparation, service or utensil/warewashing is conducted at a servicing area. [228.2(129)]
- The area shall include overhead protection for any supplying, cleaning or servicing operation. Areas used for water loading and/or wastewater discharge through a closed hose system do not need overhead protection. [#45, 228.221(c)(1)(A)]
- The location for the flushing and drainage of liquid wastes shall be separate from the location provided for potable water servicing and loading of food supplies. [#20, 228.221(c)(1)(B)]
- 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. [#45, 228.221(c)(1)(D)]
- Potable water servicing equipment shall be installed according to Plumbing Code. [#32, 228.221(c)(1)(E)]
- The servicing area may be separate from the Central Preparation Facility (CPF).
- A servicing area may not be at a private home or living quarters. [#7, 228.174(k)]
- A servicing area is not required where only packaged food is sold and no waste water retention tanks are present [228.221(c)(1)(C)]

Documentation to Have Available for Initial Inspection:

- Certified Food Manager Certification (if there is open handling of Time/Temperature Control for Safety foods) [#21, 228.221(a)(4)(A)];
- CPF authorization (if needed) and most recent facility inspection [#47, 228.221(a)(4)(B),(C)];
- Servicing area authorization (if needed) [#47, 228.221(a)(4)(D)];
- Menu of all food items to be sold [#47, 228.221(a)(4)(E)];
- The MFU must be equipped to successfully pass inspection.

Application and Approval Process

A new MFU license application may be submitted through the mail or online. After the application is processed, a letter will be sent out to the operator to schedule an inspection with the inspector over the designated area. The MFU shall be readily moveable and be ready to come to a location designated by the authority. The unit must be operable at time of inspection without the need of electrical/water source connections, including but not limited to handwash/warewash facilities, refrigeration and wastewater disposal.

***To pass a pre-licensing inspection, a mobile food unit must meet the minimum requirements below. Use the checklist as a brief reference to the MFU requirements:**

Mobile Food Unit Checklist	
Mobile Food Unit Mobility	A vehicle mounted, self or otherwise propelled, self-contained food service operation, designed to be readily movable, and constructed of corrosion resistant material; structure placed on a trailer shall be permanently affixed.
Preparation Area Protected	Walls, floors, and ceiling are solid, light in color, smooth and easily cleanable; protect against weather, rodents, insects and other animals.
Central Preparation Facility (CPF) may include servicing area	Approved by the health department; documentation (letter of authorization) required for approval; most recent inspection maintained on the MFU.
Servicing Area	Place to fill up potable water and authorized to dispose waste water from the MFU (i.e. approved car wash; RV Park); A private home or living quarters may not be used; letter of authorization
Potable Water Tank	Water must be from an approved source; permanently installed; tank labeled as "Potable Water" and have a ¾-inch inlet.
Liquid Waste Retention Tank	least 15% larger than the potable water storage tank, permanently installed, sloped to drain 1-inch in inner diameter and labeled "wastewater".
Hot and Cold Water	Under pressure and provided to all sinks.
Handwash Sink	Shall be its own fixture; conveniently located and accessible.
Three Compartment Sink	Each compartment shall be large enough to clean largest equipment/utensil.
Hot and Cold Holding Equipment	Adequate to maintain Time / Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods at required temperatures.
Restrooms	Provided; conveniently located.
Certified Food Manager Certificate	Required if handling open TCS foods.

Mobile food establishment equipment and criteria may vary depending on the type of operation. Refer to the Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER) for complete information regarding the requirements or contact the PSRFSU at (512) 834-6753 for further information or view our website at www.dshs.texas.gov/foodestablishments.