

# Essential Food Safety Factsheet for Regulators: Mobile Food Unit Best Practices



Welcome to the Mobile Food Units (MFUs) Best Practice Fact Sheet tailored for food safety regulators! As stewards of public health and safety, your role in overseeing mobile food operations is instrumental in ensuring that consumers enjoy delicious meals without compromising their well-being.

This fact sheet serves as a comprehensive guide consolidating best practices and regulatory recommendations to empower regulators like you in effectively enforcing food safety protocols.

## Developing a Risk Rating System for MFUs

- Risk 1:** Commercially processed individually packaged frozen foods requiring time/temperature control for safety. No food preparation occurs and all food is packaged; a handwashing sink and a three-compartment sink are not required.
- Risk 2:** Ready-to-eat foods for assemble-serve, heat-serve, and hold-serve. Includes hot dogs pre-wrapped with bacon at commissary.
- Risk 3:** Foods that are assemble-serve, heat-serve, cook-serve, and hold-serve. Includes cooking of raw animal food.

### Background on Mobile Food Units

Mobile Food establishments are food establishments that are designed and maintained to be readily movable and mounted on a motorized vehicle frame or vehicle-drawn or a pushcart. MFUs are also interchangeably referred to as Mobile Food Establishments and Mobile Food Service Operations. Mobile units range in type from push carts to food preparation vehicles including watercrafts.



## Pre-Opening Plan Review

- Complete set of plans to scale that are legible.
- Proposed menu.
- Top view layout of equipment.
- Side view plumbing schematic.
- Hand wash sink.
- Fresh potable water tank dimensions:
  - > Tank fills at top or higher point.
  - > At least five-gallon capacity required for an MFU with only a hand sink.
  - > At least 30-gallon capacity required for an MFU with a three-compartment sink.
  - > Minimum flow rate of one-half gallon per minute.
  - > Risk Type 3 MFU is required to have a three-compartment sink.
  - > If an MFU has a food preparation sink in addition to the sinks listed, an additional 20 gallons of fresh potable water must be available.
- Wastewater tank dimensions:
  - > 15% greater than the fresh potable water tank.
  - > Tank drains at lowest point.
- Combination mixing faucets with hot and cold water at all sinks.
- Fresh water inlet of  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch or less with a quick-disconnect design.
- Wastewater outlet of one-inch inner diameter or greater with shut-off valve and a quick-disconnect design.
- All equipment ANSI/NSF approved.
- Name and model numbers of equipment.
- Design and construction materials used.
- Food contact surface materials used.
- NSF/ANSI food grade water hose.
- Lighting (at least 50 foot candles or 540 lux).
- Water heater or other approved hot water source.
- Windows or service openings (enclosed MFUs):
  - > Provide dimensions.
  - > Effectively screened by 16 mesh to 25.4mm (16 mesh to 1 inch) screens.
- Business name of MFU must be on back and at least one side of MFU.



## Commissary Requirements

### Written agreement details:

- A written agreement that must be signed between the commissary operator and the mobile food unit operator with a copy provided to the Health Department.
- This agreement will give access to the service area to adequately meet all requirements in the regulations.
- A permitted restaurant or facility may serve as a commissary.



### Definition and Purpose of a Commissary

A catering establishment, restaurant, or health permitted facility to which a mobile food unit returns daily for such things as vehicle and equipment cleaning, discharging liquid or solid wastes, refilling water tanks and ice bins, and where food is kept, handled, prepared, packaged, or stored.

## **Requirements for a fully self-contained mobile food unit:**

- A vehicle that meets the same requirements as a permanent facility. As a minimum the unit must have: Mechanical refrigeration, gas or electric cooking equipment, mechanical ventilation, hot and cold water under pressure, potable water holding tank, wastewater tank, hand sink, three-compartment sink, a mop sink (if the unit has no commissary), service area agreement, adequate storage for all food, single service items, and cleaning supplies.

## **Routine Inspection Checklist**

### **Exterior Requirements:**

- Business name display on at least two sides (service window) and at any entrance on at least one other side.
- Windows/service openings limited to 216 in<sup>2</sup>.
- Windows equipped with a screen (16 mesh per square inch minimum) or solid door that must be closed when not in use.
- Multiple service openings must be at least 18 inches apart.
- Waste disposal specifications:
  - > All waste disposal connections must be of different size or type than those used for supplying potable water.
  - > The waste connection must be located lower than the water inlet connection.
  - > Wastewater outlets must be greater than 1 inch.
  - > Potable water inlets must be no larger than ¾ inch unless otherwise approved by the department. Potable water system inlets must be capped when not in use.

### **Interior requirements:**

- Cab or driving portion completely separated from the food preparation and serving areas by a wall or door.
- Test strips for sanitizer.
- Doors to the food preparation and serving areas must be self-closing and kept closed.
- Three-compartment sink:
  - > Each compartment (12"x 12"x10" deep) or (10"x14"x 10" deep).
  - > Two integral drain boards or one with an overhead shelf (144 square inches for drain board size).
  - > Food grade hose if connecting to water supply.
  - > Handwashing sink (9"x 9" x5" deep) with integral splash guards.
  - > A pressurized potable water system supplying hot and cold water with a minimum capacity of 30 gallons.
  - > Liquid waste storage tank with a capacity 15% more than freshwater.

### **Operational requirements:**

- TCS foods must not be held over from a previous day's operation.
- Food preparation must be limited to cooking, reheating, or assembling ingredients. No cooling of foods.
- If operating for more than 2 hours, a sanitary toilet must be available within two hundred feet of the unit.
- Standard Operating Procedures specific to the Mobile Unit.

### **Commissary requirements:**

- Must report to the commissary unless it is a fully self-contained mobile food unit.



## [FACT SHEET]

July 2024



## Acknowledgments

This publication was made possible through support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Cooperative Agreement Grant No. OT18-1802. NACCHO is grateful for the support from the Food Safety Workgroup members as well as our federal partners. Its contents are solely the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the sponsor.

## Note

These are best practices modeled from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Food Code. Regulations may change from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

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For more information, visit NACCHO's food safety webpage: [www.naccho.org/food-safety](http://www.naccho.org/food-safety).



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