



**Oregon Health Authority**  
**Food, Pool & Lodging, Health and Safety Program**

## **MOBILE FOOD UNIT OPERATION GUIDE**

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Guidelines for Food Service

OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY

# Mobile Food Unit Operation Guide

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## QUESTIONS?

Contact your county health department for information on licensing your mobile unit:

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PROVIDERPARTNERRESOURCES/LOCALHEALTHDEPARTMENTRESOURCES/Pages/lhd.aspx>

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[www.healthoregon.org/foodsafety](http://www.healthoregon.org/foodsafety)

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# **Mobile Food Unit Operation Guide**

## **A summary of the Food Sanitation Rules relating to mobile food units**

**T**he Mobile Food Unit Operational Guide is intended to help you set up and operate your mobile food unit in a sanitary and safe manner. By focusing on critical food safety practices, you will reduce the possibility of foodborne illness. While this document contains some detailed information about the rules for the construction and operation of mobile food units, it does not contain all the requirements for your unit. Unless otherwise noted, sections of the Food Sanitation Rules, Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) 333-150-0000 are provided for you to obtain specific rule requirements. The Oregon Food Sanitation Rules [www.healthoregon.org/foodsafety](http://www.healthoregon.org/foodsafety).

## **Licensing Your Mobile Food Unit**

**A license is required.** Before a Mobile Food Unit is licensed, it must go through a plan review with the local Environmental Health Department. Prior to licensing, there may be other agencies from which you will be required to obtain approvals. These include, but are not limited to planning (zoning), Fire Marshall, and other city or county authorities. Oregon law requires that all food service activities open to the public be licensed **PRIOR** to operation.

**Maintain the unit as approved.** Mobile food units must be maintained and operated as originally designed and approved. Units that have been modified without approval must revert to the approved design and operation. If a mobile unit operates in a county other than where it is licensed, the operator is required to notify the health department in the county where it has moved prior to operating.

## County Health Departments

**Contact your county health department** early in your planning process. Determine what county you will be operating your mobile unit. The county's environmental health program contact information can also be found at this website or in the table below:  
<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PROVIDERPARTNERRESOURCES/LOCALHEALTHDEPARTMENTRESOURCES/Pages/lhd.aspx>

Baker	541-473-5186	Lake	541-947-6045
Benton	541-766-6841	Lane	541-682-4480
Clackamas	503-655-8384	Lincoln	541-265-4127
Clatsop	503-325-8500	Linn	541-967-3821
Columbia	503-397-7210	Malheur	541-473-5186
Coos	541-266-6720	Marion	503-588-5346
Crook	541-447-8155	Morrow	541-278-6394
Curry	541-425-7545	Multnomah	503-988-3400
Deschutes	541-322-7400	Polk	503-623-9237
Douglas	541-440-3574	Sherman-NCPH	541-506-2753
Gilliam-NCPH	541-506-2753	Tillamook	503-842-3943
Grant	541-620-0965	Umatilla	541-278-6394
Harney	541-620-0965	Union	541-962-8818
Hood River	541-387-6885	Wallowa	971-673-0442
Jackson	541-774-8206	Wasco-NCPH	541-506-2753
Jefferson	541-475-4456	Washington	503-846-8722
Josephine	541-474-5325	Wheeler	541-620-0965
Klamath	541-883-1122	Yamhill	503-434-7525

## What is a Mobile Food Unit?

A mobile food unit is any vehicle that is self-propelled, or can be pulled or pushed down a sidewalk, street, highway or waterway. Food may be prepared or processed on this vehicle, and the vehicle is used to sell and dispense food to the ultimate consumer. Mobile food units must be secured and protected from contamination when not in operation. Mobile food units have no size limit, but they must meet the following requirements:

**Wheels:** Mobile units must be mobile at all times during operation. The unit must be on wheels that are functional and appropriate for the type of unit at all times.

**Designed in One Piece:** Mobile food units must be designed and constructed to move as a single piece. Mobile units may not be designed to be assembled at the operating location.  
333-162-0020

**Integral:** The unit and all operations and equipment must be integral to the unit. This does not preclude the use of one outdoor cooking unit such as a BBQ with a Class IV unit.

**Water and Sewer Capacity:** Potable water tanks must be designed to be accessible and translucent to determine cleanliness and cleaned at least every 6 months. The tanks must

accommodate the amount of water needed for the operation of the unit including at least 30 gallons for dishwashing, 5 gallons for handwashing, and additional gallonage needed for food preparation and cleaning. The waste tank must be a minimum of 15% greater than the freshwater tank. A mobile food unit may connect to water and sewer if it is available at the operating location. If the unit cannot connect directly to the sewer, then the unit may not connect to the public water system. The water and sewer tanks may not be removed from the unit even if water and sewer are available. 5-305.11

**Water Pressure:** All sinks must provide water under pressure of a least 20 PSI or provide for a continuous flow of water. Gravity fed is not allowed.

## **How is a Mobile Food Unit Classified?**

There are four types of mobile food units. The mobile food unit classifications are based on the menu. A mobile food unit can serve menu items within its classification number or below (see Table 1). For example, a Class III unit may also sell items allowed under Class II and I.

- Class I** These units can serve only intact, packaged foods and non-potentially hazardous beverages. No preparation or assembly of foods or beverages may take place on the unit. Non-potentially hazardous beverages may be provided from covered urns or dispenser heads only. No dispensed ice is allowed.
- Class II** These units may serve foods allowed under Class I and provide hot and cold holding display areas from which unpackaged foods are displayed. Self-service by customers of unpackaged food is not allowed. Preparation, assembly or cooking of foods is not allowed on this unit.
- Class III** These units may serve any food item allowed under Class II, and may cook, prepare and assemble food items on the unit. However, cooking of raw animal food on the unit is not allowed.
- Class IV** These mobile food units may serve a full menu.

**Table 1: Mobile Food Unit General Requirements and Limitations**

Requirements	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV
Water Supply Required	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Handwashing System Required	No	Yes <sup>1</sup>	Yes <sup>1</sup>	Yes <sup>1</sup>
Dishwashing Sinks Required	No	Yes – Or Licensed Commissary <sup>2</sup>	Yes – Or Licensed Commissary <sup>2</sup>	Yes <sup>2</sup>
Assembly or Preparation Allowed	No	No	Yes	Yes
Cooking Allowed	No	No	Yes <sup>3</sup>	Yes
Off-Unit Cooking Operation Allowed	No	No	No	Yes
Restroom Required	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Examples	Prepackaged Sandwiches/ Dispensed Soda	Service of Unpackaged Food Items	Espresso/ Hot Dogs	No Menu Limitation

<sup>1</sup>The handwashing system must be plumbed to provide hot and cold or tempered running water and a minimum of 5 gallons of water must be dedicated for handwashing.

<sup>2</sup>If provided, must have a minimum of 30 gallons of water for dishwashing or twice the capacity of the three compartment sinks, whichever is greater.

<sup>3</sup>May only cook foods that are not potentially hazardous when raw (rice, pasta, etc.). Animal foods must be pre-cooked.

## Base of Operation

**Base of Operation** Mobile food units must operate from a base of operation or be fully self-contained. The regulatory authority will determine whether self-contained mobile food units have the ability to operate without a base of operation. To do so, the units must contain all the equipment and utensils that a commissary would provide. A mobile food unit may not serve as a commissary for another mobile food unit.

## Activities Allowed Outside of the Unit

All operations and equipment must be an integral part of the mobile food unit, unless your proposed activity meets one of the three exceptions and specific conditions are met. The three exceptions are the use of a cooking unit, customer seating, and auxiliary storage.

### **Cooking Unit**

#### **Cooking Unit:**

Class IV mobile food units may use **one** cooking unit, such as a BBQ or pizza oven that is not integral to the unit. The cooking unit **may not** be a flat top grill, griddle, wok, steamtable, stovetop, oven or similar cooking device. The cooking unit must be able to move with the unit.

A Class IV mobile food unit may use a cooking unit when:

- It is in close proximity to the mobile food unit
- It is used only for cooking. Processing, portioning, preparation, or assembly of food must be conducted from inside the mobile food unit
- A handwashing system must be provided adjacent to the cooking unit.

### **Seating for Customers**

Operators may provide seating for customers if restrooms are readily accessible within 500 feet of the mobile food unit 6-402.11 The restroom must have a handwashing facility that provides hot and cold running water, soap, and paper towels or air dryer.

When seating is provided, mobile food units must provide a garbage container for customers.

### **Shelves, Tables and Off-Unit Display**

Shelves or tables that are integral to the unit may be used to display non-potentially hazardous condiments and customer single-use articles such as napkins and plastic utensils. Mobile food units may display commercially packaged, non-potentially hazardous food items, such as cans of soda or bags of chips, off the unit if they are limited to what might be sold during a typical meal period.

### **Auxiliary storage**

**Auxiliary storage shall be limited to an amount that can be used in the course of a day's operation** and stored in such a manner as to prevent

contamination or infestation (water-tight covered containers). At the end of the day, items **must be placed in the unit or a licensed warehouse**. No self-service, assembly or preparation activities may occur from the auxiliary storage container.

Refrigerators and freezers may **not** be placed outside the unit and must be in the unit or in a licensed warehouse. Handling of unpackaged foods, dishwashing and ice making are **prohibited** in a warehouse.



## **Mobile Food Units Operating at Temporary Events**

Events include fairs, carnivals, circuses, festivals, concerts or any other temporary public gathering. As a licensed mobile food unit, you may operate as a single-event temporary restaurant as specified under ORS 624.650. If you are operating at a temporary event that you may utilize off-unit tables and display areas for non-potentially hazardous foods and dispensed beverages, condiments, and single-service articles such as napkins and utensils. However, the off-unit tables and display areas allowed under this rule may not be used to conduct activities such as food preparation, assembly or cooking. In addition, the display or dispensing of potentially hazardous foods is not allowed. Mobile food units that place equipment or conduct operations outside the unit that are beyond those allowed in this rule must obtain a single-event temporary restaurant license from the county where the event will be held.

## **Food Handler Certificates**

All food service workers must obtain a food handler certificate. For more information on how to obtain a food handler certificate, contact your County Health Department or go to:  
<https://www.orfoodhandlers.com/eMain.aspx>

## Food Sanitation Requirements

### Person In Charge (PIC)

Someone at your mobile unit must be in charge during all hours of operation. This person is responsible for knowing the food sanitation rules and the procedures within your unit. This person needs to be able to provide employees with information they need to perform their job. The Person In Charge (PIC) must inform employees to notify the PIC when the employee is experiencing fever, sore throat, or gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, and nausea. The PIC must have the authority to send an employee home (Sections 2-101.11; 2-201.12). The PIC must also be able to describe the major food allergens and the symptoms that they could cause if a customer had an allergic reaction.

The person in charge is required to demonstrate knowledge of rules applicable to the food service operation. Demonstration of knowledge can be met by obtaining a food manager training certificate, having no critical violations, or by correctly answering the inspector's food safety questions. Critical violations are violations that are known to cause foodborne illness. See [www.healthoregon.org/foodsafety/](http://www.healthoregon.org/foodsafety/) for approved food manager certificates.

### Sick Employees Must Not Work

**Employee Illness** Any person, who is infected with a communicable disease, has vomiting, abdominal cramps or diarrhea must **not** work in food service until the person is completely free from symptoms (Section 2-201.11). Employees with undiagnosed vomiting and diarrhea may not return to work for at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone.

Infected sores or cuts on employee hands must have a watertight cover such as a finger cot that protects the lesion and a single-use-non-latex glove is worn. Infected sores or cuts on other parts of the body, such as the arms, need to be covered by a dry clean tight-fitting bandage. Latex gloves are prohibited (Section 3-304.15).

### Handwashing Facilities

Handwashing facilities must have warm running water, dispensed soap, paper towels, and a wastebasket. (Sections 6-301.11; 6-301.12; 6-301.20; 6-302.11).

Class II, III and IV mobile units must be plumbed to provide hot and cold running water.

**When and How to Wash Hands** Handwashing is very important when working with food and drinks. Handwashing removes microorganisms that are known to cause illness. Food workers need to wash hands between changing tasks, after handling raw meats, and anytime hands may have been contaminated. The best way to wash hands is to scrub for about 20 seconds with warm running water and soap. Rinse and dry hands with paper towels (Sections 2-301.12; 2-301.14; 2-301.15).

A double handwash is required whenever you enter the unit, after using the restroom, after smoking, and anytime hands become contaminated with body fluids. A double handwash requires you to lather hands with soap and warm water for approximately 20 seconds, rinse, and repeat a second time. Dry hands with paper towel. A double handwash is to prevent the spread of diseases that workers might have even though they are not yet showing the symptoms (Section 2-301.13).

## **Food Source**

All food products must be wholesome and free of spoilage, microorganisms, toxic chemicals, and other harmful substances that can make people sick. All food products must be prepared, stored, handled, or displayed so that it is safe for people to eat (Sections 3-201.11 thru 3-201.17).

Home canned or home processed foods are not allowed. All food must either be prepared in the unit or obtained from an approved source. Home-prepared foods must not be stored on the unit or served to the public. The only alternative to preparing the food in the unit is to prepare the food in an approved licensed facility such as a commissary. If you plan to prepare food off the unit, a separate commissary license is required.

## **Water Source**

All water used in the mobile food unit must be from an approved public water system. A mobile food unit may also use commercially bottled water (Sections 5-1; 5-2; 5-3).

## Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHF)

Potentially hazardous foods are:

- Food of an animal origin (raw or cooked)
- Cooked plant products
- Raw seed sprouts, cut melons, garlic and oil mixtures, cut leafy greens and tomatoes

Examples: hamburgers, tacos, hot dogs, spaghetti, chili, cooked rice, cooked potatoes, and cooked beans (Section 1-201.10).

## Food Temperatures

**Hot and Cold Holding** Potentially hazardous foods must be kept cold at 41°F or colder or kept hot at 135°F or hotter. Temperatures between 41°F and 135°F allow for rapid growth of bacteria that can make people sick. Use equipment capable of holding food hot (135°F or hotter). Open flames often fail and blow out. Be sure equipment will work and can hold food hot at all times (Sections 3-501.11 thru 3-501.19).

Use refrigerators or ice to store food cold (41°F). The ice must be from an approved source. All containers used must allow for water to drain away as ice melts (like an insulated cooler with drain plug). Keep enough ice available to keep the food surrounded by ice for the duration of the operation.

**Date Marking** Date-mark ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods that will be kept longer than 24 hours at 41°F with a date to discard at 7 days from the day of preparation.

**Thawing Foods** Foods may be thawed under refrigeration, under cool running water, or in a microwave if it will be cooked immediately.

**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 it from 135°F to 70°F within two hours. Then the food must cool from 70°F to 41°F within four hours. If the food does not reach 70°F within two hours, you must reheat the food to 165°F, and start the cooling process again or you may serve it immediately or hot hold the food until service. If the food takes longer than four hours to drop from 70°F to 41°F, it must be discarded. Refer to the food handler manual for more information or look online at: [www.healthoregon.org/foodsafety](http://www.healthoregon.org/foodsafety).

**Cooking** Cook raw animal products to the following internal temperatures (Sections 3-401.11 thru 3-401.13):

- Ground beef and other ground meats to 155°F
- Pork, eggs, fish and other potentially hazardous foods 145°F

A consumer advisory will be required for facilities that serve raw or under cooked animal

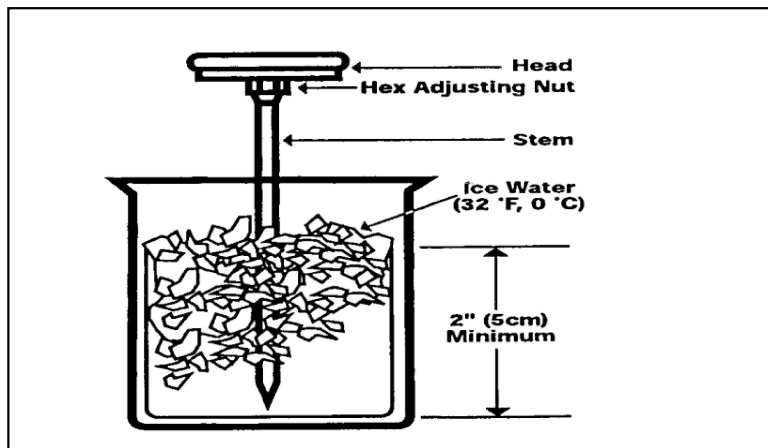
products, such as “burgers cooked to order”.

**Reheating** All potentially hazardous foods that have been cooked and cooled must be reheated to at least 165°F within two hours before being placed in hot holding (Section 3-403.11).

## Thermometers

Metal-stem probe food thermometers with a temperature range of 0°F to 220°F are required to test food temperatures when holding foods hot, cold or when cooking raw animal products. Clean and sanitize your thermometer after each use (Sections 4-203.11; 4-502.11). A small diameter probe is required to measure the temperature of thin foods, such as burgers and fish fillets.

It is important to ensure that the thermometer is working properly. An easy way to check your thermometer is to pack a container with crushed ice and add enough water to make it slushy. Put the thermometer into the slush and wait for 30 seconds until the dial stops moving. The dial should read 32°F. If it has a different reading, adjust the hex nut keeping the probe in the slush until it reads 32°F. For digital thermometers, follow manufacturer instructions on how to adjust the thermometer.



Refrigerator thermometers are required to confirm that the refrigerator or cooler is staying cold at 41°F (Section 4-204.112).

## Dishwashing

A commercial dishwasher or a three-compartment sink are used to wash, rinse, and sanitize all equipment and utensils. Using a three-compartment sink, wash equipment and utensils with soapy hot water, rinse with hot water, immerse in sanitizer and air dry. Sanitizer can be made up of 50-100 ppm of chlorine bleach or 200 ppm of quaternary ammonium. Use test strips that are made for the sanitizer that you are using. The test strips will ensure that the sanitizer has been mixed according to manufacturer's directions (Chapter 4).

For units that do not have a dishwashing, you must bring multiple clean utensils to replace any that have been in use for four hours or utensils that have been dropped or contaminated.

## **Cleaning and Sanitizing**

Clean and sanitize food-contact surfaces between preparing raw and ready-to-eat foods. Food contact surfaces must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized as with dishwashing. Wiping cloths must be stored in a sanitizing solution between uses. Wipe cloths used for wiping areas that contacted raw animal products must be stored in a container of sanitizer separate from all other sanitizers (Section 3-304.14).

## **General Food Protection**

- Store food and utensils up off the floor. Store food only in food grade containers. Protect food and utensils from dust and other contaminants (Sections 3-305.11; 4-1)
- Store chemicals such as liquid bleach and detergents below and separate from the food and utensils. Properly label all chemical containers (Section 7-2)
- Keep all garbage in a watertight container with lid (Section 5-5)
- Dispose of wastewater properly into a plumbed sewer (Section 5-4)
- Protect food from insects and rodents (Sections 6-202.15; 6-501.111)