



DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

FOOD PROTECTION BUREAU

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**FOOD CART AND MOBILE FOOD UNIT  
CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATING GUIDELINES**

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## **Definitions**

**“Commissary”** shall mean a Department-approved staging area where a food cart, mobile food unit, shaved ice stand or transportation vehicle returns regularly for maintenance activities such as equipment cleaning, stocking, storing, discharging liquid or solid wastes, refilling water tanks and ice bins, and boarding food. If the food cart, mobile food unit, or shaved ice stand has adequate facilities to accommodate normal functions of the commissary some items may not be required at the commissary.

**“Cooking Temperatures”** shall mean the required temperatures met during the cooking process in order to assure the food is safe. Temperatures vary depending on the food being cooked. Poultry and stuffed meats shall reach 165 degrees F for a minimum of 15 seconds on the innermost or thickest section of the meat. Ground beef and meats that have been chopped or tenderized shall reach 155 degrees F for a minimum of 15 seconds. Solid portions of pork, fish and beef shall reach 145 degrees F for a minimum of 15 seconds. If the meat has already been cooked the meat shall hold temperature of 135 degrees F until served or discarded.

**“Food Cart”** shall mean a readily moveable non-self propelled vehicle that uses approved equipment and is limited to the cooking and serving of foods that are maintained at proper temperatures.

**“Imminent Health Hazard”** shall mean a significant threat or danger to health that is considered to exist when there is evidence sufficient to show that a product, practice, circumstance, or event creates a situation that requires immediate correction or cessation of operation to prevent injury or illness based on the number of potential injuries or illnesses and the nature, severity, and duration of the anticipated injury or illness.

**“Mobile Food Unit”** shall mean an enclosed inside readily moveable, vehicle-mounted food establishment which food is prepared and from which food is sold or given away.

**All other applicable definitions can be found in the Salt Lake Valley Health Department**

**Regulation #5 “Food Sanitation Regulation.”**

## **Permit Options**

Prior to operating a food cart or mobile food unit in Salt Lake County a permit application must be submitted to the Salt Lake Valley Health Department, (SLCOHD) Bureau of Food Protection (See above for address). Due to adverse winter weather conditions, the SLCOHD has two permit options for food carts and mobile food units. A complete list of all menu items is required for the application process.

1. If the food cart or mobile unit's owner plans to operate year round they are required to have a regular "Cart Permit" and the owner must provide verifiable and demonstrable evidence of a system that will prevent all water lines from freezing. (Approval by the Health Department does not guarantee the effectiveness of the system and will not prevent a food cart or mobile food unit's closure in the event that the food cart or mobile food unit water line freezes.)
2. A food cart or mobile unit owner may choose a "Seasonal Permit" which allows the operation of the food facility during the months of March through November. (The owner remains responsible for not operating during these months if unseasonable weather results in the water lines freezing.)

## **Permit Approval Guidelines for Food Carts and Mobile Food Units**

**All food cart or mobile food unit permit approval requests will be subject to the following:**

1. If the applicant is planning the construction or modification of a food cart or mobile food unit he/she must go through the plan review process as established by the SLCOHD with all applicable fees. This plan review requires the submission of blueprints, drawn to scale with dark ink, to the SLCOHD Bureau of Food Protection. This blueprint must indicate the features of the cart: measurements, materials used, top and side schematic view of equipment layouts, plumbing for fresh and waste water systems, and heating or cooling devices. For further details on construction and operation of a food cart or mobile food unit refer to the Salt Lake Valley Health Department Health Regulation #5 “Food Sanitation Regulation.”

*(Note: The applicant should contact the city or municipality in which operations will be conducted to make sure that the food cart or mobile food unit is in compliance with their regulations.)*

2. The applicant may request a construction inspection to receive comment on the construction or modification of the food cart or mobile food unit.
3. A pre-opening inspection is required for a new food cart, mobile food unit or an existing (previously approved) food cart or mobile food unit before a permit is issued. During this inspection an assigned inspector will verify that the construction and materials used are in compliance with Health Regulation #5. The pre-opening inspection may be conducted at the commissary. The owner or person-in-charge of the food cart or mobile food unit shall be prepared with copies of all documentation required (see documents required below). They will also be required to have all the materials needed for day to day operation which include: soap, water, single use towels (paper towels), probe type thermometers that register internal food temperatures (thermometer range must be between 0 to 220 degrees F or greater), coolers to keep potentially hazardous food at 41 degrees F, chemical sanitizer with sanitizer test strips, hair

restraints, disposable food handling gloves as well as other barriers to bare hand contact i.e. tongs, deli tissue, dispensing equipment, spatulas, etc. The owner or person-in-charge will demonstrate the functionality of all equipment (i.e. grill, steam table or other equipment capable of maintaining hot foods at 135 degrees F) and able to cook foods at appropriate temperatures (see “Cooking Temperatures” in definitions for appropriate cooking temperatures.) A permanent hand washing station with acceptable water pressure is to be installed with hot and cold water available through a mixing valve. Only systems that use a water pump to provide water pressure will be approved. Gravity fed water systems **will not** be approved. In addition, the owner or person-in-charge will demonstrate basic food safety knowledge to minimize the incidence of food borne illnesses. When the minimum requirements are met, an annual permit will be issued.

4. Basic construction requirements include:

- i. Each food cart or mobile food unit shall be constructed to minimize vermin, dust, dirt, splash, and spillage encountered under normal use. It shall also be easily cleaned, maintained, and serviced. A food cart or mobile food unit must be designed and constructed so that all areas of food preparation and food service are protected from contamination. Food preparation areas must be enclosed by a minimum of three sides. Food carts or mobile food units must also be constructed with overhead protection. The food preparation area of the food cart or mobile food unit shall be protected from contamination during storage and transportation. A custom fit cover may be required for food carts to provide adequate protection during transportation. A tarp or loose fitting style cover will not be approved. Design and construction shall minimize the potential of cross-contamination.
- ii. Any collapsible part of the food cart or mobile food unit, such as enclosures to protect the operators and food supplies from adverse environmental conditions, shall be approved by meeting the following criteria:
  1. All materials used must be durable, smooth and easily cleanable.

2. All materials shall be fireproof or fire retardant.
    3. Such enclosures may only be installed on the main food preparation side of the food cart or mobile food unit.
    4. All food cart or mobile food unit enclosures are subject to approval by the SLCOHD.
  5. Be sure to follow-up with other local jurisdictions such as the fire department and city as they may have additional or stricter requirements.
- iii. Surface materials in the food contact areas shall be smooth, easily cleanable, nonabsorbent, corrosion resistant, nontoxic, and stable under normal use conditions. None of the material may impart an odor, color, taste, or contribute to the adulteration of food.
  - iv. The business name shall be plainly indicated and easily readable on the exterior customer service side of a food cart and on both sides of a mobile food unit. Lettering shall be a minimum of 4 inches in height.
  - v. A food cart or mobile food unit shall have a hand sink.
  - vi. A food cart or mobile food unit shall have a three compartment sink on the food cart, mobile food unit or at the commissary. The three compartment sink shall completely accommodate (completely submerge) the largest utensil, dish or pan to be washed, rinsed and sanitized. The three compartment sink shall be equipped with drain boards or utensil racks large enough to accommodate all soiled and cleaned items that accumulate during hours of operation.
  - vii. Each food cart or mobile food unit shall have an installed single potable water (food grade approved) tank. The tank is to be safe, durable, corrosion resistant, non-absorbent and finished to have a smooth and easily cleanable surface. The inlet or filling point of the tank shall be on top of the tank. The tank shall be sloped to an outlet that allows complete drainage of the tank. The tank shall be large enough to supply an adequate amount of water

whenever the food cart or mobile food unit is in operation. A minimum of ten (10) gallons storage capacity in the potable water system is required for food carts or mobile food units for the purposes of hand washing. A minimum of thirty (30) gallons storage capacity is required for food carts and mobile food units that are equipped with a three compartment sink. The equation used to calculate the size of potable water tank in gallons is Length x Width x Height / (divided by) 231 = gallons the tank will hold.

Example: 12in. x 12in. x 17in. =  $24 \times 24 \times 17 / 231 = 10.6$  Gallons

*It is recommended that the water tank be removable for ease of washing, rinsing and sanitizing.*

- viii. A food grade approved water hose shall be provided (garden hoses are not food grade). This hose is to be used only to fill the fresh water tank. When the hose is not in use, the hose ends (inlet and outlet) must be capped or connected to each other. *It is recommended that each food cart or mobile food unit have its' own hose and it be stored on the food cart or mobile food unit.*
- ix. Each food cart or mobile food unit must have a single wastewater storage tank with minimum holding capacity being 15% larger than the potable water tank. If a ten (10) gallon potable water tank is used a minimum wastewater tank capacity of eleven and a half (11.5) gallons is required. If a thirty (30) gallon potable water tank is used a minimum wastewater tank capacity of thirty four and a half (34.5) gallons is required. To calculate wastewater holding tank capacity, take the gallons of the potable water tank x 1.15. Example: 20 gallons x 1.15 = 23 gallons. The wastewater tank shall have a spigot or other valve of adequate size located at the lowest point in the tank to allow for drainage. The inlet or filling point of the tank shall be on top of the tank.
- x. The water temperature from the three compartment sink faucet must be greater than 110°F in order to maintain 110°F in the wash solution.

- xi. A commercial water heating system shall be supplied and be of adequate capacity and recovery rate to furnish a continuous supply of hot water. A commercial water heating system may hold one or more gallons of water and must be included as part of capacity for the wastewater tank. For example if the water heating system holds three gallons and the potable water tank holds 30 gallons the potable water tank capacity is now 33 gallons. A homemade water heating system that runs copper tubing through a heating element **will not** be approved. Hand sinks shall have a minimum temperature of 100°F within 30 seconds of opening the faucet. Three compartment sinks shall maintain a wash solution at a minimum of 110°F. In addition, if the mobile unit is outfitted with a three compartment sink, the capacity of the hot water heater shall be sufficient to fill each compartment of the three compartment sink to completely submerge the largest piece of food equipment in the mobile unit and have enough remaining capacity for hand washing.
- xii. A splashguard that is made of waterproof material and is at least 12 inches high must be installed between the hand sink and the food preparation area if adjacent to each other.
- xiii. Adequate lighting must be available. Minimum lighting requirements are 50 foot candles for food preparation areas (lighting must be bright enough to fully illuminate preparation areas). Supplemental lighting must be available during hours when natural light does not meet this minimum requirement and all light bulbs must be shatter-proof or shielded.

### **Required Documents and Information**

**In addition to completing an application, the following documents must be available before a permit will be issued. If the document ends with an asterisk (\*) it must be present on the food cart or mobile food unit for verification during inspections by SLCOHD. Copies of documents are acceptable.**

1. **Commissary agreement\*** with an approved facility that complies with Health Regulation #5.  
This form is available at the SLCOHD Bureau of Food Protection.
2. **Restroom agreement\*** for a restroom that is within 500 feet of the vending location. The restroom must be open during all hours of the food cart or mobile food unit hours of operation.  
This form is available at the SLCOHD Bureau of Food Protection.
3. **Registered food safety manager certificate\*** from SLCOHD.
4. **Written waste water disposal plan\*** for all gray water including the sanitizing water and melted ice from coolers or ice chests.
5. **Food handler cards\*** for each employee.
6. Days and hours of operation.
7. Vending location or address where food operations are being conducted.

### **Daily Operation Requirements**

**The following list is a summary of important practices all food cart and mobile food unit operators must comply with.**

1. **The following food cart or mobile food unit activities are not allowed at home:**
  - i. Cooking
  - ii. Portioning
  - iii. Thawing
  - iv. Seasoning
  - v. Storage of food or equipment including single use items
  - vi. Cleaning of equipment or
  - vii. Other activities related to the food cart or mobile food unit.

**If any of these activities are performed at home the food cart or mobile food facility may be closed by SLCOHD as an imminent health hazard.**

2. Food carts and mobile food units shall be returned to the commissary on a daily basis for the purposes of cleaning, storing, stocking and water tank maintenance. SLCOHD may approve less frequent returns to a commissary depending on the capacities of the food cart or mobile food unit, menus and volumes of food being served. Failure to return to the commissary may lead to the facility being closed by SLCOHD as an imminent health hazard. If the food cart is being repaired or having maintenance work done and unable to be returned to its commissary, the person-in-charge is required to notify the Bureau of Food Protection at SLCOHD.
3. A food cart or mobile food unit shall be stored at the commissary when not in use. Additionally the facilities shall be protected during storage to minimize vermin, dust, dirt, and splash.
4. The potable water tank, pump and hoses shall be flushed and sanitized before being placed in service after construction, repair, modification, periods of non-use and at a minimum of every 30 days.
5. Potentially hazardous foods (time/temperature control for safety food) shall be maintained at less than or equal to 41°F or greater than or equal to 135°F. A thermometer for checking the interior food temperatures shall be available during all hours of operation.
6. If potentially hazardous foods (time/temperature control for safety food) are being reheated for hot holding, they must be reheated to 165°F and then placed in hot holding equipment at a temperature of 135°F or above.
7. The hand sink shall be operational at all times of operation. Failure to have an operational hand sink shall be deemed an imminent health hazard and result in closure of the food cart or mobile food unit. Hand sinks are to be used by the food facility operators for hand washing only.
8. Hand washing must take place before food handling begins. Hand washing shall occur after touching bare human body parts other than clean hands and clean exposed portions of arms, after using the toilet room, after coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, using tobacco, eating, or drinking, after handling money or soiled equipment and utensils.

Additionally hand washing must take place during food preparation, as often as necessary to remove soil and contamination and to prevent cross contamination when changing tasks, when switching between working with raw food and working with ready-to-eat food, before donning gloves and after engaging in other activities that contaminate the hands.

9. The food cart or mobile food unit owner shall be responsible to prevent any water line freeze during the winter months. If a line freeze prevents the proper flow of water to the hand washing sink it shall be considered an imminent health hazard, and the food cart or mobile food unit shall be closed.
10. There shall be no contact of ready-to-eat foods with bare hands. Food that is ready to be served to the public and will not go through a process to kill microorganisms (such as cooking) before serving is considered ready-to-eat.
11. Food carts and mobile food units shall be equipped and set-up with sanitizer solution, sanitizer wiping clothes, and sanitizer test strips.
12. Food carts and mobile food units that do not have a three compartment sink for washing, rinsing and sanitizing shall have adequate numbers of utensils available at the food cart or mobile food unit to cover the period of operation before returning to the commissary.
13. Supplies of food, utensils, equipment and single-use items that are not contained in the food cart or mobile food unit during transportation and operation must be stored and protected in food grade containers.
14. Storage of food, equipment, and single-use articles is prohibited in a private vehicle when a food cart or mobile food unit is not in operation.
15. A food cart or mobile food unit shall only provide single-use articles for use by the consumer.
16. Sewage and other liquid wastes from a food cart or mobile food unit shall be disposed of at a SLCOHD approved location. If wastewater is found to be illegally dumped, such as dumping

down a storm drain, a fee of \$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00 will be assessed for each reoccurring violation.

17. The waste water tank shall be thoroughly flushed and drained into a sanitary sewer.
18. A food cart shall operate on a concrete, asphalt or surface that has been effectively treated to minimize dust and facilitate maintenance.

### **Personal Health and Cleanliness**

The permit holder shall require food employees to report information about their health to the person-in-charge as it pertains to anyone of the following: Norovirus, Salmonella, Shigella, E-Coli or Hepatitis A virus. Employees diagnosed with these illnesses are prohibited from engaging in food operations. Additionally, a food employee shall be restricted from working if they have any of the following symptoms: diarrhea, vomiting, jaundice, or sore throat with fever. If a food employee has a lesion containing pus such as a boil or infected wound that is open or draining and is on the hands or wrists, the employee shall be restricted from working or shall wear an impermeable cover, finger cot, and a single-use glove.

### **Commissary Requirements**

A food cart or mobile food unit owner is required to have a contract with a SLCOHD approved commissary. The commissary will be where a food cart or mobile food unit and transportation vehicles return for maintenance activities such as equipment cleaning, stocking, storing, discharging liquid or solid wastes, food preparation and cooking, refilling water tanks and ice bins, and boarding food. If the

food cart or mobile food unit has adequate facilities to accommodate normal functions of the commissary, some items may not be required at the commissary.

**The following are SLCOHD requirements for a facility to qualify as a commissary.**

1. A commissary shall be in good standing with SLCOHD. A permitted facility acting as a commissary with a history of multiple critical violations is subject to have SLCOHD revoke its commissary status.
2. A commissary shall have adequate storage space for food, single use items, cleaning supplies, equipment and utensils. The available space inside the commissary will determine the number of carts the commissary may service.
3. A commissary shall have adequate parking space for food carts and mobile food units.
4. Refrigeration units must be available at the commissary and must have adequate refrigeration storage capacity for each vendor. Refrigeration units can be supplied by the commissary or by the owner of the food cart or mobile food unit. Refrigeration units that hold multiple vendors' food shall have the name of each vendor and have a clearly designated storage space within, identifying each user's space. The assigned spaces must be divided so as to prevent cross-contamination especially when storing potentially hazardous foods such as raw meats. Refrigerator units must be NSF approved or equivalent. The commissary contract with each food cart or mobile food unit owner shall stipulate that the commissary management shall have access to these units for purposes of the SLCOHD conducting inspections. If the food cart or mobile food unit vendor is not present, the commissary management will accompany the SLCOHD inspectors during inspections.
5. A commissary shall provide a kitchen that is equipped with adequate food preparation space and adequate cooking equipment for food carts and mobile food units that lack on-board cooking

equipment. Cooking areas must comply with SLCOHD regulations, as well as local building and fire regulations.

6. A commissary shall provide an adequate number of three compartment sinks and hand sinks to accommodate dish washing during the busiest times at the commissary. Three compartment sinks shall accommodate the largest utensil and equipment to be washed, rinsed and sanitized.
7. If a commissary provides a “Cleaning Area” where food carts and mobile food units are washed, this area must be in compliance with all environmental laws, making sure that all waste water is properly disposed to the sanitary sewer. If wastewater is found to be draining down a storm drain, a fee of \$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00 will be assessed for each reoccurring violation.
8. The commissary shall provide a “Commissary Log” to record the daily activities of the food carts and mobile food units located at the facility. The logs are to be filled out and signed by the food cart or mobile food unit operators, including their signatures. The commissary personnel will monitor the sign-in sheets for accuracy and completion. Upon request from the SLCOHD a copy of the sign-in Commissary Log will be provided by the commissary management. This may be on a regularly scheduled monthly occurrence. At the time of inspection, the commissary shall provide all commissary logs for each of the vendors.
9. Each commissary reserves the right to determine its hours of operation. All food vendors are responsible to choose a commissary that will allow full access to its facilities during the food units’ hours of operation. All food units must be returned to the commissary after their hours of operation, including weekends.
10. If the commissary management finds that a food cart or mobile food unit is not utilizing the commissary on a regular basis, as required by SLCOHD Health Regulation #5, Food Sanitation, the commissary management shall report this to SLCOHD.
11. Commissary personnel shall have, at a minimum, a current food handler card.

## **Permit Renewal Guidelines for Food Carts and Mobile Food Units**

Annual renewal of a food cart or mobile food unit permit is required. A food cart or mobile food unit owner will receive a bill for renewal by mail. In order to receive a new permit the owner/operator must bring the food cart or mobile food unit to SLCOHD Bureau of Food Protection. The food cart or mobile food unit will be inspected and if approved for renewal, new stickers will be placed on the unit. All “Required Documents and Information” listed above with updates must be brought to the Bureau of Food Protection. The food cart or mobile food unit owner shall keep SLCOHD informed of any change in contact information (i.e. address, phone number(s), commissary, cart operating location and ownership change.) Failure to comply will lead to a suspension of the food cart or mobile food unit permit.

### **Penalty Procedures for All Permitted Food Facilities Identified as Imminent Health Hazards**

The SLCOHD has a vested interest in local public health, and together with its enforcement division of Environmental Health and the Bureau of Food Protection is poised to provide preventive education and enforcement of the food safety policies as established in Health Regulation #5. **The Bureau of Food Protection has established new procedures and penalties for food facilities that consistently are found to be imminent health hazards and therefore issued closures notices to cease food operations.**

1. Receipt of the first permit suspension shall result in suspension of food service operations until the SLCOHD has verified that identified violations of Health Regulation #5 have been corrected. A follow-up inspection with a \$100.00 fee will be conducted to verify violations before reopening.

2. Receipt of a second permit suspension shall result in suspension of food service operations for a period of a minimum of seven days. A follow-up inspection with a \$100.00 fee will be conducted to verify violations before reopening.
3. Receipt of a third permit suspension may result in the food establishment permit being revoked. The owner of the said establishment may be restricted from operating a food establishment for a minimum of 180 days, at which time the owner may be required to make application and submit a plan review etc., as if the establishment was a new establishment. Additional requirements may be required by the SLCOHD for approval of the establishment to operate.