

City of Detroit Health Department (D Health)
Food Safety Unit
3245 E. Jefferson
Detroit, Michigan 48207
(313) 876-0135

How to Start a Mobile Food Business in the City of Detroit.

What do I need to do?

1. Obtain a mobile food truck plan review application from the Detroit Health Department Food Safety Section or your local Health Department.
<http://www.michigan.gov/mdard>. Search: Plan Review
2. Submit appropriate fees and information requested from the “Special Transitory Food Unit and Mobile Food Establishment Plan Submission Instructions” page.
3. The plan reviewer has 30 business days of receipt of plans and specifications to review them and notify applicant of specifications that are incomplete or inadequate. Once revisions are submitted and approved, then a pre-opening inspection can be scheduled. (MFL 289.6107)
4. The Plan Reviewer will determine with the applicant whether to license the business as a Mobile Food Establishment or a Special Transitory Food Unit (STFU).
5. Once the applicant passes the pre-opening inspection with no priority or priority foundation violations, they will receive an inspection report approving them to operate.
6. A decal denoting how the mobile unit was licensed will be affixed on the back of the mobile unit.

What is the difference between mobile food establishment and a STFU?

Mobile food establishment (MFL 289.6135):

Definition: A food establishment operating from a vehicle, including a watercraft, which returns to a mobile food establishment commissary for servicing and maintenance at least once every 24 hours.

1. Must return to a commissary or service base after 24 hours.
2. The name and address of the business operating a mobile food establishment must be affixed on each side of the exterior of the vehicle in letters not less than 3 inches high and 3/8 of an inch wide...
3. Keep a copy of any license limitations attached to the license of a mobile food establishment at all times.
4. If a mobile food establishment is operating on a regularly scheduled route, the license holder shall provide a copy of the route schedule when the license is approved and every time the route schedule is changed.
5. Obtain at least one operation inspection during the licensing year if the unit is seasonal or 2 operational inspections if it is not.
6. Two decals will be affixed by Detroit Health Department or local health department on the mobile food establishment so as to be visible when in transit and while serving the public.
7. Licensing Fees are set by Detroit Health Department or local health department.

Special Transitory Food Unit (STFU) (MFL289.6137):

Definition: A temporary food establishment that is licensed to operate throughout the state without the 14-day limits or a mobile establishment that is not required to return to a commissary.

1. Keep a copy of the approved standard operating procedures in the unit and available for review upon evaluation.
2. One decal will be affix by Detroit Health Department or local health department on the unit so as to be visible while serving.
3. The name and address of the business operating a mobile food establishment must be affixed on each side of the exterior of the vehicle in letters not less than 3 inches high and 3/8 of an inch wide... when it is a mobile unit or displayed during set-up.
4. Operate in compliance with approved standard operating procedures
5. Before serving food within the jurisdiction of a local health department, notify the local health department or Detroit Health Department in writing of each location in the jurisdiction at which food will be served and the dates and hours of service at least 4 business days prior to operation.
6. While in operation, request and receive 2 evaluations per licensing year spaced generally over the span of the operating season. A local health department or Detroit Health Department will charge a \$90.00 fee for such evaluation.
7. Must send a copy of all evaluation reports to the regulatory authority (Licensing Health Department) that approved the license within 30 days after receipt.
8. If the license holder fails to comply with any of the requirements of this section or the food code, the establishment is ineligible for licensure as a STFU for the following licensing year and must apply for a temporary or mobile food establishment license.
9. The License fee and operational inspection fee is set by the State of Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Note: A STFU license does not require a commissary but the unit must operate according to approved standard operating procedures.

What is a commissary?

Mobile food establishment commissary is an operation that is capable of servicing a mobile food establishment. The following are services that the commissary must provide:

1. Allow access to the mobile food establishment operator at least once every 24 hours of operation.
2. All food and beverages from the commissary that is served from the mobile unit, with the exception of packaged food that may come from another supplier.
3. Adequate space for proper storage of food, utensils, equipment, linens and single service articles.
4. Sufficient equipment/utensil washing, rinsing, sanitization and drying capacities.
5. Approved and adequate facilities for the collection and disposal of solid waste.
6. A servicing area with overhead protection (Food Code 6-202.18).

Optional services are:

1. Facilities for the sanitary disposal of liquid waste (FL 6131)
2. Facilities for providing a sufficient quantity of potable water from an approved source to the mobile food service establishment (Food Code 5-101, 5-102, 5-103).

Note: In short a commissary is a food establishment that can provide most of these services to mobile food units. The equipment will be determined by the services it will provide.

What type of equipment do I need on my truck?

The equipment that is required on your truck is based on the menu that you are planning to have and how you plan to operate the vehicle. The truck needs to look like a mini commercial kitchen on wheels.

All kitchens must have:

- A 3 compartment sink or a dishwashing machine
- A hand sink
- Refrigeration
- Cooking Equipment and an exhaust hood, when required
- Dry Storage Space
- Hot and/or Cold holding equipment, when required
- A Fire extinguisher
- A potable water source (Freshwater tank that is at least 5 gallons or more and a Waste water tank that is 15% larger). This will depend on the amount of water needed to operate your unit.

Note: There may be other equipment that is needed but it will be determined by you and in your plan review.

Where can I operate my unit?

Detroit:

Once you have been approved to operate in the State of Michigan, you can go to the Coleman A. Young Building to obtain a business license and petition for a location in the City of Detroit. If you want to rent yourself out to different special events, contact the event coordinator for more information.

Building and Safety Business Licensing Center
Coleman A Young Municipal
2 Woodward, Rm 402
Detroit, Michigan 48226
(313)224-3179

Anywhere outside of Detroit:

Remember, your unit has a State of Michigan Food Service License so you can go anywhere in the state of Michigan. You just have to get permission from the local jurisdiction.