



Municipality of Anchorage
Anchorage Health Department
Environmental Health Services, Food Safety & Sanitation Program
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Mobile Food Unit – Guidance Sheet

Mobile food units are popular in Alaska. As they are kitchens on wheels, they must have the essentials to prepare and serve food safely. To operate in Anchorage, mobile food units must meet Anchorage Food Code (AMC 16.60) and other municipal code requirements.

Anchorage Food Code (AMC 16.60) defines a “mobile food unit” as a type of food service located in a vehicle, trailer, or pushcart that is capable of easily moving daily for servicing of water and wastewater holding tanks, that operates out of an approved commissary or other approved facility (unless it is a self-contained mobile food unit), and that has a menu that is usually restricted to service of a specific food. A mobile food unit, other than a pushcart, must be currently titled and licensed by the State of Alaska as a motor vehicle or trailer. A unit is not considered as a “mobile food unit” if it does not completely retain its mobility or is connected to water or sewer.

Mobile food unit basic requirements are as follows:

- **Hand sink** – a sink dedicated for handwashing only.
- **3-Compartment sink** – for washing, rinsing, and sanitizing any equipment or utensils used on the mobile. If this sink is provided with an air-gap, it may also be used for food preparation, such as rinsing produce or thawing meat, as long as the sink is washed, rinsed, and sanitized **before and after** food prep use. A commissary may be used in place of an on-site 3-compartment sink, if approved by the department.
- **Food prep sink** – if food is being rinsed or thawed. An air gap must be present in the drain line. A commissary may be used in place of an on-site food prep sink, if approved by the department.
- **Hot and cold running water under pressure** – you must have sufficient hot water to operate during peak food service times. A hot water heater able to provide adequately and a pump to force water through both hot and cold water lines will be required.
- **Smooth, easily cleanable, and non-absorbent surfaces** – the floors, walls, and ceiling must meet these requirements.
- **Identification** – the name of the facility and the permit number as printed on the permit must be provided on both sides of the mobile, in at least three-inch-high letters and numbers. Pushcarts must have this identification on the customer side of the cart.
- **Roving vendor license** – contact the municipal city clerk’s office to discuss license requirements.

General Anchorage Food Code requirements must be followed. References specific to mobile food units are as follows:

16.60.050 – Definitions.

Commissary means a permitted food establishment where support services are provided to one or more caterers, vending machines, mobile food units, or temporary food establishments; these support services may include:

1. Food preparation, handling, packaging, or storage;
2. Storage of utensils, including single-service items, or supplies;
3. Washing, rinsing, and sanitizing of equipment and utensils;
4. Storage of a mobile food unit when the unit is not in use;
5. Cleaning of a mobile food unit; or
6. Supplying potable water or dumping wastewater.

Mobile food unit means a type of permitted food establishment located in a vehicle, trailer, or pushcart that:

1. Completely retains its mobility and is capable of easily moving daily for servicing of water and wastewater holding tanks;
2. Operates out of an commissary or other approved facility (unless the unit is a self-contained mobile food unit);
3. Has a menu usually restricted to service of specific food;
4. A mobile food unit, other than a pushcart, shall:
 - a. Not exceed eight feet six inches in width or forty-eight feet in length, including overhangs.
 - b. Be currently licensed by the State of Alaska as a motor vehicle or trailer having a tow hitch, chassis, axles, wheels and trailer lamps and reflectors required by AMC [chapter 9.44](#).
 - c. Not be connected to utilities except electrical.
 - d. Meet the requirements of [section 23.10.104.4](#).

Mobile retail unit means a type of permitted food establishment operated out of a vehicle or trailer, licensed by the state as a motor vehicle, with packaged retail food items or whole or packaged seafood available for sale.

Pushcart means a wheeled, non-motorized mobile food unit, manually movable by one or two persons that:

1. Is no more than three (3) feet wide and six (6) feet long excluding attached extensions from the ends of the cart. The overall length of the pushcart with attached extensions shall not exceed ten (10) feet;
2. Is capable of easily moving daily;
3. Operates out of a commissary;
4. Has a menu restricted to service of department approved specific foods;
5. Contains on or within the cart sufficient food, utensils, paper products, cleaning supplies, potable water supply, and wastewater holding capacity necessary for operating daily; and
6. May use two additional ice chests and one additional barbecue grill placed immediately adjacent to the street pushcart.

TCS food means a food that requires time and temperature control for safety to limit pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation (formerly called a potentially hazardous food or PHF), as defined in section 1-201.10(B) of the 2013 FDA Model Code.

16.60.200 - Water supply.

- A. The operator of a permitted food establishment not directly connected to a water supply and subject to 18 AAC 80 shall ensure the potable water is obtained from an approved source and is transported, delivered, and stored in accordance with 18 AAC 80.
- B. In addition to subsection A. above, the operator of a permitted food establishment not directly connected to a water supply and subject to 18 AAC 80 shall take the following actions at least annually or, for food establishments operating seasonally, no more than seven days prior to opening:
 1. Superchlorinate each potable water tank for at least two hours with 50 ppm chlorine solution;
 2. Drain, thoroughly rinse, and refill the tank;
 3. Submit samples of potable water being used in the facility to a certified laboratory for coliform analysis every 12 months during operation; and
 4. Forward a copy of the coliform analysis report to the department within five days of receiving the results of the analysis.

16.60.230 - Mobile food units and kiosks.

- A. In addition to the other requirements of this chapter, the operator of a mobile food unit or kiosk shall comply with this section.
- B. The operator of a mobile food unit or kiosk, except a self-contained mobile food unit or kiosk described in section C. below, shall:
 1. Ensure functions that cannot be performed in the mobile food unit or kiosk, but are required by this code, be performed at least once each day in a commissary or other location approved by the department, such as cleaning the unit, equipment, and utensils; servicing potable water and wastewater tanks; and restocking food and supplies;
 2. Provide to the department a letter of agreement between the operator and the commissary outlining:
 - a. The days and hours the commissary is to be used; and
 - b. The extent of support services to be provided at the commissary.
 3. Advise the department in writing immediately, but not later than 72 hours, if use of the commissary is discontinued or the commissary used is changed.
- C. The operator of a self-contained mobile food unit or kiosk is not required to work out of a commissary as described in section B. above if the department determines the unit has:
 1. Installed on the unit, adequate for one full day of operation, water and wastewater holding tanks, hand washing, and ware washing facilities; and
 2. Adequate storage facilities on the unit for all food, equipment, utensils, including single-service items, and supplies used in the operation.
- D. The operator of a mobile food unit shall:
 1. Provide only single-service articles to consumers;

2. Ensure toilet facilities are available within 200 feet of the unit or conveniently located and available to employees during work hours, as approved by the department; and
3. Provide on both sides of the mobile food unit, in at least three-inch-high letters and numbers, the name of the facility and the permit number as printed on the permit, if the mobile food unit is not a pushcart.

- E. In addition to the other requirements of this section, the operator of a pushcart shall ensure:
1. The name of the facility and the permit number as printed on the permit are provided on the main customer service side of the pushcart, in at least three-inch-high letters and numbers.
 2. A pushcart is limited to preparing and serving ready-to-eat foods.
 3. Sufficient food, utensils, paper products, cleaning supplies, potable water supply, and wastewater holding capacity necessary for daily operations are contained on or within the cart, except the operator of the pushcart may provide:
 - a. Two additional ice chests; and
 - b. One additional barbecue grill.
 4. Water tanks installed for hand washing only are at least a five-gallon capacity.
 5. Pre-preparation of food, including washing, slicing, peeling, cutting, and assembly, occurs at the commissary.
 6. TCS food heated and/or hot held at the push cart is not cooled and later served to the public.
 7. Pushcarts return each day to a commissary approved by the department, to ensure functions that cannot be performed on the push cart are properly performed; such as cleaning the unit, equipment, and utensils; servicing potable water and wastewater tanks; and restocking food and supplies.

- F. In addition to the other applicable requirements of this chapter, the operator of a mobile retail unit:

1. Shall drain, wash, rinse, and sanitize refrigerators and ice chests after each day's operation or as approved by the department.
2. Shall not process seafood as defined in 18 AAC 34 at the mobile retail unit or commissary.
3. Shall provide approved and adequate hand washing, this shall include, at a minimum:
 - a. A container with a minimum capacity of five gallons, equipped with a faucet-type spigot, and filled with warm water or, if the container is not insulated, a means to heat the water;
 - b. A container to catch wastewater from hand washing; and
 - c. Soap and single-service towels.
4. Chemically treated towelettes as specified in 2013 FDA Model Food Code paragraph 5-203.11(C) may be substituted for handwashing requirements in subsection F.3. above.*

- G. Mobile food units wider than eight feet six inches that were permitted in the Municipality of Anchorage prior to the adoption of the width requirement listed in [section 16.60.050](#), shall be exempt from the width requirement in [section 16.60.050](#).

16.60.160 - 2013 FDA Model Food Code: Water, plumbing, and waste.

The 2013 FDA Model Food Code Chapter 5 governing "Water, Plumbing, and Waste" is adopted and incorporated by reference herein with the addition of the following:

- A. Section 5-203.13 of the 2013 FDA Model Food Code shall not apply to a mobile food unit or kiosk. (e.g. Mobile food units are not required to have a service sink)

Materials

5-301.11 Approved.

Materials that are used in the construction of a mobile water tank, mobile FOOD ESTABLISHMENT water tank, and appurtenances shall be:

- P
(A) Safe;
(B) Durable, CORROSION-RESISTANT, and nonabsorbent; and
(C) Finished to have a SMOOTH, EASILY CLEANABLE surface.

Design and Construction

5-302.11 Enclosed System, Sloped to Drain.

A mobile water tank shall be:

- (A) Enclosed from the filling inlet to the discharge outlet; and
(B) Sloped to an outlet that allows complete drainage of the tank.

5-302.12 Inspection and Cleaning Port, Protected and Secured.

If a water tank is designed with an access port for inspection and cleaning, the opening shall be in the top of the tank and:

- (A) Flanged upward at least 13 mm (one-half inch); and
(B) Equipped with a port cover assembly that is:
 (1) Provided with a gasket and a device for securing the cover in place, and
 (2) Flanged to overlap the opening and sloped to drain.

5-302.13 "V" Type Threads, Use Limitation.

A fitting with "V" type threads on a water tank inlet or outlet shall be allowed only when a hose is permanently attached.

5-302.14 Tank Vent, Protected.

If provided, a water tank vent shall terminate in a downward direction and shall be covered with:

- (A) 16 mesh to 25.4 mm (16 mesh to 1 inch) screen or equivalent when the vent is in a protected area; or
(B) A protective filter when the vent is in an area that is not protected from windblown dirt and debris.

5-302.15 Inlet and Outlet, Sloped to Drain.

- (A) A water tank and its inlet and outlet shall be sloped to drain.
(B) A water tank inlet shall be positioned so that it is protected from contaminants such as waste discharge, road dust, oil, or grease.

5-302.16 Hose, Construction and Identification.

A hose used for conveying DRINKING WATER from a water tank shall be:

- P
(A) Safe;
(B) Durable, CORROSION-RESISTANT, and nonabsorbent;

- (C) Resistant to pitting, chipping, crazing, scratching, scoring, distortion, and decomposition;
- (D) Finished with a SMOOTH interior surface; and
- (E) Clearly and durably identified as to its use if not permanently attached.

Numbers and Capacities

5-303.11 Filter, Compressed Air.

A filter that does not pass oil or oil vapors shall be installed in the air supply line between the compressor and DRINKING WATER system when compressed air is used to pressurize the water tank system.

5-303.12 Protective Cover or Device.

A cap and keeper chain, closed cabinet, closed storage tube, or other APPROVED protective cover or device shall be provided for a water inlet, outlet, and hose.

5-303.13 Mobile Food Establishment Tank Inlet.

A mobile FOOD ESTABLISHMENT'S water tank inlet shall be:

- (A) 19.1 mm (three-fourths inch) in inner diameter or less; and
- (B) Provided with a hose connection of a size or type that will prevent its use for any other service.

Operation and Maintenance

5-304.11 System Flushing and Sanitization.

A water tank, pump, and hoses shall be flushed and SANITIZED before being placed in service after construction, repair, modification, and periods of nonuse.

5-304.12 Using a Pump and Hoses, Backflow Prevention.

A PERSON shall operate a water tank, pump, and hoses so that backflow and other contamination of the water supply are prevented.

5-304.13 Protecting Inlet, Outlet, and Hose Fitting.

If not in use, a water tank and hose inlet and outlet fitting shall be protected using a cover or device as specified under § 5-303.12.

5-304.14 Tank, Pump, and Hoses, Dedication.

- (A) Except as specified in ¶ (B) of this section, a water tank, pump, and hoses used for conveying DRINKING WATER shall be used for no other purpose.
- (B) Water tanks, pumps, and hoses APPROVED for liquid FOODS may be used for conveying DRINKING WATER if they are cleaned and SANITIZED before they are used to convey water.

In addition to Anchorage Food Code requirements, there are Anchorage Administrative Code permit requirements for Mobile Food Units (AMC 23.10.104.4). These include:

23.10.104.4.1 - Application requirements.

The following items are required at the time of the permit application:

- A. A completed commercial permit application.

- B. A site plan showing where the unit will be located.
- C. Approval from the Department of Health and Human Services for compliance with requirements of AMC 16.60.
- D. A current copy of the State of Alaska vehicle or trailer registration, if the structure is not a pushcart.

23.10.104.4 - Mobile food units.

Mobile food units, including coffee carts, (hereafter referred to as units) may be set up without obtaining a building permit and certificate of occupancy under the following restrictions:

- A. The unit shall not exceed 8'6" in width or 48' in length, including overhangs.
 - B. The unit shall be readily moveable and either:
 - 1. Currently titled and licensed by the State of Alaska as a:
 - i. Motor vehicle, or
 - ii. Trailer having a tow hitch, chassis, axles, wheels and trailer lamps and reflectors required by AMC [chapter 9.44](#); or
 - 2. A pushcart as defined in AMC [16.60.050](#) and that satisfies the requirements of AMC 16.60.230E.
 - C. The unit shall obtain approval by the Department of Health and Human Services.
 - D. The unit shall not be connected to utilities, except electrical.
 - E. A licensed electrical contractor shall obtain a permit to provide electrical service and/or connection to the unit. The electrical connection shall consist of an approved flexible cord, attachment cap and receptacle approved for the location.
 - F. The unit shall comply with the National Electrical Code as noted by NEC 550.4 (A). A code compliance inspection shall be performed and necessary corrections made before power is connected. A licensed electrical contractor shall obtain a permit and make the corrections. The permit for providing electrical service and/or connection may include the corrections when performed by the same contractor.
 - G. Service equipment located adjacent to vehicle lanes or the unit shall be provided with bollards or other substantial protective barriers.
 - H. The unit shall not reduce the required number of parking spaces at existing facilities.
 - I. Mobile food units shall be an allowable use in the zoning district where the unit is proposed to be located.
 - J. An Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) approved, currently serviced fire extinguisher shall be located inside the unit.
 - K. Propane tanks shall be protected from vehicle impact and shall be located in accordance with the fire code.
 - L. The unit location shall not impact fire lanes or emergency vehicle access to nearby structures.
 - M. The unit location is subject to approval by fire plan review and traffic engineering.
 - N. Public occupancy shall not be allowed inside the unit. The unit may be occupied by the owner and employees only.
- Units that do not meet all of these requirements shall be considered a structure and require a building permit in accordance with this code.

AHD will notify Development Services of pending approvals for mobile food units except for pushcarts as defined in AMC 16.60.

***Numbers and Capacities**

5-203.11 Handwashing Sinks.

- (A) Except as specified in ¶¶ (B) and (C) of this section, at least 1 HANDWASHING SINK, a number of HANDWASHING SINKS necessary for their convenient use by EMPLOYEES in areas specified under § 5-204.11, and not fewer than the number of HANDWASHING SINKS required by LAW shall be provided.
- (B) If APPROVED and capable of removing the types of soils encountered in the FOOD operations involved, automatic handwashing facilities may be substituted for HANDWASHING SINKS in a FOOD ESTABLISHMENT that has at least 1 HANDWASHING SINK.
- (C) If APPROVED, when FOOD exposure is limited and HANDWASHING SINKS are not conveniently available, such as in some mobile or TEMPORARY FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS or at some VENDING MACHINE LOCATIONS, EMPLOYEES may use chemically treated towelettes for handwashing.

Cross references:

AMC 16.60, AMC 23.10.104, 2013 FDA Model Food Code 5-203.11(C), 2013 FDA Model Food Code 5-203.11, and 5-301 through 5-304