MOBILE FOOD UNIT PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

A Mobile Food Unit (MFU) is a self-contained food service operation, designed to be readily movable (such as motorized mobile food truck, trailers, pushcarts, and roadside vendors) and used to store, prepare, display, serve or sell food. Units must be mobile and remain readily movable at all times. To obtain a Mobile Food Unit Permit, the MFU must be brought to the Environmental Public Health Division (EPH) of Harris County Public Health (HCPH) on the designated day and the following criteria must be met.

*NOTE: Starting October 1, 2018, all MFUs must have an appointment time to bring the unit to EPH for an inspection.*

1. **Request an Inspection Appointment** - email ephmfu@phs.hctx.net to request an inspection appointment and submit the required documentation. MFU inspections will be scheduled on Tuesdays. Do not bring the MFU without an appointment.

2. **Document Submittal** - All documents must be submitted together and include the establishment number on all correspondence. To streamline the process, email all documents to ephmfu@phs.hctx.net no less than 5 business days before the appointment. Failure to provide current copies of all documents will result in a re-inspection fee, failed inspection, and re-scheduled appointment.

**Required Documentation**

- If the owner does not have a current Texas Driver’s License, provide:
  - A valid Texas Driver’s License for the driver of the MFU and Notarized driver/operator contract

- A Certified Food Manager certificate for an employee of the establishment
- A State of Texas Sales Tax Permit Taxpayer ID. Contact the Texas Comptroller at www.window.state.tx.us or 1-800-252-5555
- Valid vehicle registration for truck or tow vehicle and trailer (if applicable)
- Valid vehicle insurance for truck or tow vehicle
- Copy of the menu
- If the MFU will operate at a location for more than 2 hours, the following letters, written in English, are required even if the property is owned by the MFU owner.
  - Notarized letter to allow use of a restroom located within 300 feet of the MFU operation address. The restroom must be a public use facility, located in a fixed structure within 300-ft of the unit that includes a flushing toilet, hand wash sink with hot and cold running water, soap & hand drying provision, and open during the hours the unit will be open. Private residences and portable restrooms are not accepted.
  - Notarized letter to allow property use from the property owner

3. **Mobile Unit Inspection Appointment** – After an appointment request is made, EPH will call within five business days to schedule the permitting inspection appointment. At EPH, the MFU will be inspected by EPH staff and a Harris County Fire Marshall (FMO). EPH will not approve permits for units that do not meet the FMO minimum requirements. Please contact (281) 436-8000 for information regarding the FMO safety inspection. All equipment on the unit must be functioning at the time of the inspection. Each MFU will only be inspected one time per day. The owner must be present with his/her current/valid TXDL. If the owner does not have a TXDL, the owner must bring current photographic identification issued by the State of Texas or United States agency and the driver must be present with his/her TXDL.
New Permits or New Owners
If the MFU will be permitted for the first time or has a new owner, complete the MFU application to submit to the EPH in the office or online and pay the $125 Plan Review fee. The application & fee must be received by EPH before an appointment will be set.

*NOTE: Plan Review fees are non-refundable. Please ensure Harris County Public Health is your regulatory jurisdiction before the fee is paid.

Mobile Unit Requirements
- All units must have current/valid TX license plates and Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), if required.
- If the unit is a trailer or pushcart towed or hauled by a separate vehicle, the VIN, current/valid license plates for the tow vehicle will also be confirmed during the inspection.
- MFUs brought in by a commercially rented or commercial tow vehicle will not be inspected.
- A power source (generator) must be brought to demonstrate the functionality of equipment, including the vent hood (if applicable), and hot/cold running water. Hot water must reach a minimum of 100°F.
- The mobile unit must have at least one three-compartment sink large enough to accommodate immersion of the largest equipment and utensils and a separate hand washing sink.
- Only single service (plastic or paper) utensils, tableware, plates, etc. shall be provided for customers.
- All equipment must be permanently installed on the MFU. No equipment such as BBQ pits or cookers can be used unless it is on the unit.
- Food cannot be prepared at home. All foods served on the MFU must be prepared on the unit or permitted food establishment.
- The unit must have the name clearly posted on at least 2-sides of the unit in bold black letters at least 6 inches high, not less than 1 ½ inches in width, permanently affixed, and prominently displayed.
- Name posted on the unit must match the business name listed on the Texas Sales Tax Permit.
- The waste water tank shall be at least 15% larger than the fresh water tank, sloped to drain with a 1” minimum diameter valve, and labeled Waste Water.
- The fresh water tank shall have a capped or protected inlet with a ¾” maximum diameter and be labeled Potable Water on both the tank and the inlet.
- The hose used to fill the fresh water tank must be kept clean, protected, and used for no other purpose.
- If provided, the water tank vent shall end in a downward direction and be protected from windblown dirt and debris with either a protective filter or a 1/16” mesh screen or equivalent.
- Live animals shall be excluded from the immediate adjacent surrounding areas of all mobile food establishments while in operation.
- The unit must go to an approved commissary for servicing in the 24 hours before every day of operation. Commissary trip tickets must be available on the unit.
- Pushcarts have additional requirements listed on the MFU PUSHCART REQUIREMENTS handout.

Once permit application is issued, the permit fee may be paid in the EPH office by cash, card, money order, or cashier’s check before 3:30pm. Only cash is accepted after 3:30pm. The permit is valid for all locations in the jurisdiction of HCPH. If for any reason a new MFU does not pass the initial permitting inspection a $50 re-inspection fee must be made before a follow up inspection can be scheduled.

ALL FOLLOW-UP INSPECTIONS ARE SCHEDULED ON THURSDAYS BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.

All rules and laws must be followed during operation to avoid issuance of a citation. By law, all units are required to visit an approved commissary daily. Failure to provide an inspector with a current/valid commissary ticket will result in a citation. **The unit must remain movable at all times regardless of the size or condition of the unit.** Any food prep, storage, or cooking performed outside the permitted unit will result in a citation for operating outside the bounds of the MFU permit. The permit is only valid for the unit itself and the activities conducted inside the unit. All approved paperwork for the MFU must be kept on the unit at all times. Falsification of any documents will result in denial of the permit and may result in a citation, suspension, and/or revocation of the permit.

- MFU permit inspections will be scheduled at 101 S. Richey St., Pasadena, TX, 77506 by appointment only. The inspection station is located on the Hargrave Street side of the building. Inspections may be cancelled or postponed due to unforeseen circumstances at the discretion of EPH management.

HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.

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