



A Guide for Operators of Mobile Food Establishments



The City of Milwaukee Health Department inspects and regulates all mobile food operations, including ice cream trucks, hot dog carts, popcorn wagons, and full restaurants on wheels. Use this guide to learn what's required to obtain the necessary licenses for your Mobile Food Establishment and Mobile Service Base.

Mobile Service Bases

Mobile restaurants must have a Mobile Service Base. This is a place to fill your water tank, dispose of wastewater, wash utensils, and store and prepare food. This base is required even if all food is prepared on the mobile unit and is in addition to the license for your vehicle or cart.

Your service base must have:

- Food preparation facilities **UNLESS** your vehicle is equipped with Health Department approved facilities.
- Utensil washing facilities (three or four compartment stainless steel sink with drainboards).
- A sink for hand washing.
- A sink with a threaded tap where the vehicle water tank can be filled with potable water. Hoses must be food grade – no garden hoses. Recreational Vehicle (RV) and restaurant supply dealers are good sources for such equipment. Supply hoses need to be protected from contamination at all times and kept in a labeled, clean container when not in use.
- A mop sink or waste drain for the disposal of wastewater.
- Storage for food and supplies.
- A food preparation sink *may* be required. It depends on your menu.

Mobile Service Base facilities must meet Wisconsin Food Code standards for floor and wall finishes, equipment and lighting. If you operate a permanent licensed establishment, you may be able to use it as a service base.

If you're sharing or leasing a facility operated by someone else, the Health Department will inspect that location in your name. You will be required to have a notarized agreement between you and the facility owner. It should specify the times that your vehicle will be using the base. If asked by an inspector, you must furnish information about the itinerary of your vehicle, so keep this information available at your service base



IMPORTANT NOTE: You cannot use a private home as a service base. Any food storage in a home is limited to commercially prepackaged, non-potentially hazardous snack foods (such as gum, candy or chips) that can be sold in a week's time. This requires an inspection and the issuance of a Food Dealer's License.

Each mobile food establishment shall return to its service base at least every 24 hours for servicing and maintenance.

Vehicle Requirements

Rule #1: Follow the Wisconsin Food Code. Purchase equipment that is listed for commercial foodservice use by an ANSI accredited listing service (such as UL, ETL or NSF). A piece of equipment that would not be accepted in a permanent food establishment will not be accepted on a mobile unit.

Handwashing and Warewashing Sink(s)

Sink requirements vary depending on the type and complexity of your operation.

- **Every** vehicle or pushcart where unpackaged food is handled **must have a hand wash sink with hot and cold water under pressure.**
- If you process food (for example: shave ice for sno-cones, make cotton candy, prepare tacos or subs) **on a vehicle**, your vehicle must have approved utensil sinks with hot and cold water under pressure. If you operate a pushcart, and your menu is limited, you don't need utensil sinks **on the cart**. In this case, you must prepare food and wash utensils at the service base.
- If you **only sell prepackaged food**, you may simply carry treated towelettes.

Water and Wastewater

You have to carry enough water to keep your sinks supplied between trips to your service base. If you are designing or buying a vehicle or cart, make sure your tanks meet these requirements.

Pushcarts with a hand wash sink must have at least a **5 gallon** water tank.

- Vehicles with hand wash sinks must have at least a **10 gallon** water tank.
- If you prepare an extensive menu on a vehicle, and wash utensils there, the vehicle must have at least a **40 gallon** water tank.
- Your **wastewater tank** must be sized 15% larger than your supply tank.

These requirements are for handwashing and utensil washing. If ingredient water (*i.e.*, to make coffee) is needed, the tanks will need to be larger or there must be a separate supply of ingredient water.

As mobile food establishments have limited water supplies:

- The water on the units is not allowed to be used for the washing of food. All produce used in mobile operations must be pre-washed.
- As the supply of water for handwashing is very limited on push carts, push carts are not allowed to handle raw meats.

Your water tank must be designed to food contact standards. If it isn't transparent, it must have a sight gauge so you can tell when you're running low. **When you're out of water in the supply tank you must refill the supply tank and empty the wastewater tank.** You cannot drain your sinks to the street. If you use a hose for the disposal of liquid waste, it must be stored in a separate cabinet labeled "for wash water hose only" when not in use.

Food Protection

Holding bins and food handling areas on pushcarts must be protected from the public with enclosures. Check with the Health Department about acceptable designs and methods.

Vehicle Surfaces

- Mobile units must meet Wisconsin Food Code standards for floor and wall finishes and lighting. All surfaces must be smooth, easily cleanable, and water resistant. Exposed wood is not allowed.

Hot and Cold Holding



You must maintain potentially hazardous foods at safe temperatures using mechanical heating, hot holding, and cold holding equipment. **Hot foods must be held at or above 135°F, cold foods must be held at or below 41°F.** Your unit must have enough power (gas or electric) to run all your equipment at the same time.



Show Your Identification!

At least two sides of your vehicle; or carried container must display the name of the person to whom the permit is issued and a local telephone number in lettering not less than 4 inches high. If the same licensee has more than one unit, each unit must have a distinctive identification number or letter. The **Food Peddler license** must be prominently displayed at all times. You must also carry the paper permit whose number matches the number on the license plate.



Food Safety Requirements

Don't forget the rules of safe food handling when you hit the street. A mobile food establishment is subject to the same rules that restaurants and grocery stores follow under the Wisconsin Food Code.

When inspectors meet you on your rounds, they will watch food handling, check the hand wash sink and take temperatures. Make sure your vehicle has a supply of tongs, tissues and/or gloves, since bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods is prohibited.



Your mobile food vending business must have at least one owner or manager who is **Wisconsin Certified in Food Protection Practices**. This manager should train and supervise all employees. Whether the certified manager is on the vehicle or not, the **person serving the food** must know the basics of safe food handling. Visit www.milwaukee.gov/cfm for more information.

Supply checklist

You should always have the following on board:

- ✓ Hand wash soap
- ✓ Single service towels
- ✓ Sanitizer solution (*i.e.*, bleach water)
- ✓ Test papers to check sanitizer strength
- ✓ Tongs, tissues and gloves
- ✓ Thermometer for checking food temperatures

Rules About Moving and Parking

Vehicles licensed for food peddling must obey all traffic laws and regulations.

1. You may not park or sell within 300 feet of a school entrance while the school is open to students. *(Section 115-45 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances)*
2. You may not stop for more than two hours in any residential block and such stops must be separated by a six-hour period. You must be in compliance with posted time limits on parking. *(Section 115-45 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances)*
3. Food, merchandise or any other article may not be sold or offered for sale for two hours immediately before the start of any scheduled event, and ending one hour immediately after the event on any public street or sidewalk within 500 feet of the
 - Midwest Express Center
 - Auditorium
 - Arena
 - Milwaukee Public Museum
 - Bradley Center
 - Performing Arts Center
 - Eagles Auditorium
 - Riverside Theater
 - Summerfest
 - Miller Park parking facilities
 - and the right of way for Jazz in the Park, River Rhythms, the Westtown Farmer's Market, and certain special events designated by the Commissioner of Public Works. *(Section 105-56 and 105-57 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances)*
4. There are other specific streets and highways where selling from a parked vehicle is prohibited. These may be found in the Common Council proceedings, the official record on file in the City Clerk's office, and the code on file in the Legislative Reference Bureau. *(Section 115-45-2-b of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances)*
5. There are other specific streets and highways where selling from a parked vehicle is prohibited. These may be found in the Common Council proceedings, the official record on file in the City Clerk's Office, and the code on file in the Legislative Reference Bureau. *(Section 115-45-2-b of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances)*

Other Rules of the Road

- Each mobile food establishment shall return to its service base at least every 24 hours for servicing and maintenance.
- Food **cannot** be sold door-to-door.
- All sales must be made on the public way (sidewalk or street) directly from your licensed unit.
- It is prohibited to make any sales from a roadway median strip, safety island, or on foot into any street or roadway (including an alley) where there is vehicular traffic.
- You cannot block or restrict an individual's access to a business or residence, and you must allow a minimum 5 ft. clearance on sidewalks for pedestrians. You cannot make any comment, request, or proposal which is obscene, lewd, lascivious, profane, filthy or indecent.
- No minor under 12 years of age may participate in the activities of a food peddler.
- Unless you have a permit **allowing night time operation**, food cannot be sold between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. This does not apply on January 1st, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, the 3rd and 4th of July, Labor Day, and on city streets adjacent to State Fair Park during the run of the Wisconsin State Fair.
- **If you are interested in selling in any of the Milwaukee County Parks, you must contact the Milwaukee County Parks System at 414-257-4503 for information.**
- If you use your mobile establishment at a festival and want to offer different items than you are normally licensed for (such as grilling next to the unit), additional licensing may be required.
- The entire operation must be fully mobile. You cannot place coolers on the ground or provide chairs or tables for your customers. Mobile units are not permitted to use electrical connections. Generators are acceptable provided they are attached to the mobile unit.

Noise

Food peddlers must comply with all city noise nuisance regulations (S 80-65-4 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances). A food peddler with a permit for a pushed, pedaled, or pulled vehicle shall not use any type of **horn**.

Toilet Facilities

Mobile Food Establishment operators must have arrangements for the use of public or private toilet facilities during all hours of operation.

Licensing

Food Peddler Permit applications are processed by the License Division of the City Clerk's Office, located in City Hall—200 East Wells Street, Room 105. You can call the License Division at (414) 286-2238; or e-mail: license@milwaukee.gov

Other Permits You May Need

If you sell ice cream or similar frozen confections, each individual that operates a pushed, pulled, carried or motorized unit needs an Ice Cream Peddler License from the City of Milwaukee.

If you also sell non-food items (on the public right-of-way) you'll need a Direct Seller's Permit from the City Clerk's License Division.

To get the Direct Seller's permit, you'll need to have, or have applied for a Wisconsin State Seller's Permit. These are issued by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, located in the State Office Building at 819 North 6th Street, in Room 408. Call them at (414) 227- 4000.

Contacting Us

City of Milwaukee Health Department
Consumer Environmental Health Division
Frank P. Zeidler Municipal Building
841 North Broadway, Room 304
Milwaukee, WI 53202-3653

Phone: (414) 286-3674 • Fax: (414) 286-5164

More information may be found on our mobile food establishment web page: www.milwaukee.gov/mobilefood

