



**Champaign-Urbana Public Health District
Champaign County Public Health Department**

Mobile Food Operations – Q&A

What is a mobile food unit?

A mobile food unit (a.k.a. food truck) is a vehicle-mounted food establishment designed to be readily movable.

What is a pushcart?

A pushcart is a non-self-propelled vehicle limited to serving non-potentially hazardous foods or commissary-wrapped food maintained at proper temperatures, or limited to the preparation and serving of frankfurters.

Are all mobile food units and pushcarts required to have an operating health permit from the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (CUPHD) or the Champaign Public County Health Department (CCPHD)?

Yes, unless they sell only prepackaged, non-potentially hazardous foods or drinks, or plain popcorn.

What governmental regulations apply to mobile food units and pushcarts?

Mobile food units and pushcarts are governed by CUPHD/CCPHD *Food Service Sanitation Rules and Regulations*.

Mobile food units and pushcarts may also be governed by other regulations. This list is not inclusive of all regulations that may apply to the operation. It is the owner's responsibility to contact the necessary jurisdictions to find out what might apply.

- Zoning and other local ordinances govern where and when these mobile food establishments can operate (i.e. on street corners, in privately owned lots, moving at all times, parked for a certain number of hours). Contact the city or village zoning department(s) where you plan to operate.
- Additional licenses, including business licenses or peddler's licenses may be required. If required, these licenses are in addition to the health permit from CUPHD/CCPHD. Please contact the city or village licensing department(s) where you plan to operate.

Every mobile food service establishment is assigned a risk category. How are they determined?

Mobile food units and pushcarts are categorized according to their level of food service. Pushcarts are usually smaller and hold less food than a trailer or truck. Some levels of food service can only be done in a fully enclosed vehicle like a truck or a trailer. Your proposed menu and preparation processes are used to determine the equipment and facilities that are required. Some basic requirements are: overhead protection; approved food service equipment (for example, meets ANSI standards); mechanical hot holding and cold holding; hand washing area with hot and cold water under pressure; a waste water system; available toilet rooms for employees; and a possible commissary.

- **Category III - No Food Preparation**

The menu is restricted to prepackaged, potentially hazardous foods like ice cream novelties; frozen meats; precooked "microwave heat and serve" foods with no food preparation; cold holding of milk; or post-mix soda dispensing.

- **Category II-Limited - Simple Food Preparation**
 1. The menu is restricted to simple food preparations such as reheating of hot dogs; hot holding cheese in a bag or ready-to-eat pizzas; sno-cones, cotton candy, or soft pretzels.
 2. A minimum of one full-time employee with a valid Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) certificate is required.

- **Category II – Moderate Food Preparation**
 1. The menu is restricted to moderate food preparations (cook and serve), such as cooking of pre-formed hamburgers; pre-portioned pork chops; pre-portioned chicken breasts; or assembling of salads with pre-cut ingredients and sandwiches.
 2. The unit must be completely enclosed, e.g. with screened openings.
 3. A minimum of one full-time employee with a valid CFPM certificate is required.

- **Category I – Complex Food Preparation**
 1. The menu is restricted only to the capacity and the types of the food equipment that are installed in the unit (or provided at a commissary). An example of Category I food preparation includes cooking, cooling and reheating of meat for pulled meat sandwiches.
 2. The unit must be completely enclosed, e.g. with screened openings.
 3. An employee with a valid CFPM certificate must be present at all times of food preparation and service.

How do I get an operating health permit for a mobile food unit or pushcart in Champaign County?

All proposed new or remodeled mobile food units and pushcarts are subject to food establishment plan review before an annual operating health permit can be issued (this includes units that have changed ownership; annual operating health permits are not transferable). See our plan review information for requirements, fees and timelines.

Do all mobile food units and pushcarts require a commissary (base of operation)?

Commissaries are often required because most mobile food units and pushcarts are not equipped to be completely self-sustaining. Commissaries provide required additional equipment or facilities that are often not available on mobile units, such as:

1. Facilities for cleaning and sanitizing of equipment and utensils.
2. Fresh water source and area for wastewater disposal.
3. Food, single-service, and equipment storage.

(Be aware that if you take your mobile unit to another county outside of Champaign County, the local health authority may require you to use a different commissary within their jurisdiction. They may also have their own permitting requirements).

How do I find an approved commissary?

An approved commissary shall have an annual operating health permit from CUPHD/CCPHD (or another approved jurisdiction). It must contain all of the equipment and facilities that are required, and must have adequate space to support an additional operation. It is the responsibility of the mobile food unit or pushcart owner to try and find one that is available. During the plan review process, we will conduct a site visit at the proposed location to determine if it is suitable for use as a commissary.

Since I am operating a mobile unit, are there requirements regarding toilet rooms?

A toilet room agreement will be required. A signed form must be submitted indicating that the staff of your mobile unit has permission to use toilet rooms at a particular location.