



Pushcarts, Popcorn Trucks and Restaurants on Wheels

A Guide for Operators of Mobile Food Establishments from the City of Milwaukee Health Department

Do you plan to sell food from a pushcart or vehicle?

The City of Milwaukee Health Department licenses 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.



What is a Service Base – And Do I Need One?

Mobile food establishments 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. The Health Department inspects and licenses your Mobile Restaurant Service Base. This license is required even if all food is prepared on the mobile unit and in addition to the license you hold 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 (four compartment stainless steel sink with drainboards).
- A sink for hand washing (If you have a four compartment sink, the pre-wash may be used for a hand wash).
- 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 and license that location in your name. The Department will require a **written 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.

Gearing Up: Vehicle Requirements

Rule #1 Follow the Wisconsin Food Code. Purchase equipment that is listed for commercial food service use by an ANSI accredited listing service (such as UL Sanitation, ETL Sanitation, NSF or CSA). 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 wash utensils at the service base.
- If you **only sell prepackaged food**, you may simply carry chemically 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:

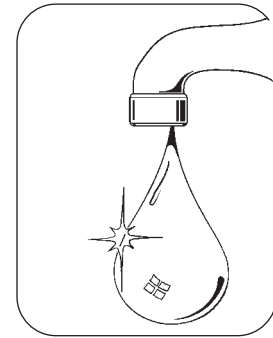
- Pushcarts with a hand wash sink must have at least a **five** gallon water tank.
- Vehicles with only hand wash sinks must have at least a **ten** gallon water tank.
- If you prepare food on a vehicle, and wash utensils there, the vehicle must have at least a **forty** gallon water tank.
- Your **wastewater 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.

Of course, 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 waste water hose only" when not in use.

If the weather outside is too cold for your water system to properly operate, you must discontinue operations until it is warm enough outside for your system to work properly.



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.

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.

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.

Food Safety Requirements

Dry Ice

If you use dry ice, follow these rules to protect yourself, your employees and customers:

- Don't handle dry ice with your bare hands.
- **Do not put dry ice directly in beverages to cool them.** This can cause severe injury.
- Dry ice gives off gases. It's put inside airtight containers or coolers, or touches them, an explosion can occur. Keep dry ice well ventilated.
- Do not use dry ice in confined areas including tightly closed vehicles. The vapors from dry ice can cause suffocation.
- Do not dump dry ice in sewers, sinks, toilets, garbage cans or areas accessible to the public. Allow unwanted dry ice to evaporate in a well-ventilated area.
- Do not allow foods such as ice cream novelties to touch dry ice directly. As dry ice is extremely cold (-109°F), products that have been in direct contact with dry ice can tear the lips and tongue, or even cause first degree burns. Provide a barrier between dry ice and food products.

Show Your Identification!

Each side of your pushed, pulled, or motorized 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.

Before you sell, the Food Peddler **license plate** must be securely fastened to the outer or inner right side of your vehicle, pushcart, or container. It must be prominently displayed at all times. You must also carry the paper permit whose number matches the number on the license plate.

Don't forget the rules of safe food handling when you hit the street. A mobile food establishment is subject to the requirements of the Wisconsin Food Code. Raw meats, poultry and fish are not allowed on mobile units and must be either factory precooked or precooked at the mobile service base prior to being placed on the mobile unit.

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.

If you process potentially hazardous food, you 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. All the rules about employee health and hygiene, cross contamination and temperature control still apply when you're on the road!

Supply checklist

You should always have the following on board:

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

Toilet Facilities

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

Rules About Moving and Parking

1. Vehicles licensed for food peddling must obey all traffic laws and regulations.
2. 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)*
3. 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)*
4. You cannot sell food from a vehicle on a public street in a **non-residential block** for more than one hour on any one day unless your vehicle is parked in compliance with all posted time limits on parking and with all other applicable parking regulations. *(Section 74-1 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances)*
5. 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
 - Summerfest Grounds
 - Milwaukee Public Museum
 - Bradley Center
 - Marcus Center for the Performing Arts
 - Eagles Auditorium, Riverside Theater • Miller Park parking facilities
 - Right-of-way for Jazz in the Park, River Rhythms, Riversplash, and the Westtown Farmer's Market.

(Section 105-56 and 105-57 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 serving 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 City of Milwaukee Health Department 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), contact the City of Milwaukee Health Department.** 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.**

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 Health Department.

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. The City Clerk's office is 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

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
Disease Control and Environmental Health
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



Tom Barrett, Mayor
Bevan K. Baker,
Commissioner of Health
www.milwaukee.gov/health

The City of Milwaukee Health Department in its capacity as an employer and service provider does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, religion, color, gender, national origin, arrest or conviction record, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, political belief or affiliation, or military participation. Persons needing disability assistance information, language assistance, or interpreter services please call 414-286-3524 or (TTY) 414-286-2025. Discrimination claims may be filed with the Department's Equal Opportunity Coordinator by calling 414-286-2359.

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

