MOBILE FOOD ESTABLISHMENT REQUIREMENTS  
(Food Preparation on the Unit)

DEFINITION
A mobile food establishment is a vehicle mounted food establishment that is readily moveable. Food service is housed in a truck or a trailer, commonly called a hot truck or an unrestricted mobile unit. Food preparation is permitted on the unit once certain requirements are met and a food establishment permit has been obtained.

The following requirements for a mobile food establishment permit are adopted from the Texas Health and Safety Code, the Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER), and the Harris County Commissioners’ Court Order of November 23, 2010, “Rules for the Regulation of Food Establishments in Harris County, Texas.” All requirements must be met before an application is issued for a permit and a medallion.

PERMITTING OF THE MOBILE FOOD ESTABLISHMENT UNIT
The mobile food establishment must be inspected before food can be prepared and sold from the unit. All mobile food establishments may be inspected Tuesdays (except Harris County holidays) at the John Phelps Courthouse located at 101 S. Richey Rd. in Pasadena from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. An application for a permit will be issued after the mobile food establishment has passed an inspection.

Note: Due to safety concerns, mobile unit inspections and re-inspections may be temporarily suspended during rain and/or severe weather. Resumption of mobile unit inspections and re-inspections will not extend past 11:00 a.m. In severe weather, call (713) 274-6300 after 8:00 a.m. to determine whether mobile unit inspections have been cancelled for the day.

Blueprints and plans are not required for a first-time inspection of a mobile food establishment. However, blueprints and plans can be reviewed to ensure that all requirements will be met before a mobile food establishment is built. Plans and blueprints can be checked at 101 South Richey St., Suite G, Monday and Wednesday only from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

To obtain a food establishment permit and medallion, a mobile food establishment must:

1. Pass an inspection demonstrating that the mobile food establishment meets all requirements including the possession of a trained food manager’s certificate, the ability to maintain temperatures and provide hot and cold running water under pressure.
2. Bring a generator to the permitting inspection for proof that all utilities and equipment are working; generators and hook ups to an electrical source are not available at the permitting site. Due to limitations on inspection space and time, you must arrive with hot water in your tank. Heating water or waiting on site to borrow a generator will not be allowed and/or tolerated.

PERMIT AND MEDALLION
All mobile food establishments must have a permit and a medallion issued by Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services. Once a permit application is issued, the permit and medallion may be purchased by cash, check or money order. You may purchase the permit and medallion at 101 South Richey Rd., Suite G, Monday thru Friday from 8:00am to 3:30pm. Paying by cash, money order or cashier’s check will allow you to obtain the medallion and the food establishment permit immediately. Any permits and medallion purchased with a personal or company check will be mailed in 4-5 weeks. Permits and medallions may also be purchased by mailing the permit application and the payment fee to Harris County PHES, 101 South Richey Rd., Suite G, Pasadena, Texas 77506. Allow 4-5 weeks to receive the permit and medallion.

Operation of a mobile food establishment without a valid permit and a medallion will result in immediate legal action. Permits and medallions are valid for one year from the date of issuance.

INSPECTIONS
Mobile food establishments are inspected several times a year. Please keep the health department informed of the general location of your mobile food establishment. If there is a relocation of the mobile food unit, a new notarized letter of permission to use the property as well as written permission to use a toilet facility must be acquired and presented to the district inspector in the area.

FOOD MANAGER’S TRAINING
A trained food safety manager must be present at the mobile food establishment during all hours of operation.

FOOD SOURCE AND FOOD PROTECTION

1. All food sold on the mobile food establishment must be either prepared at the mobile food establishment or at an approved, permitted fixed food establishment or commissary. Food may not be prepared at home. Foods offered for sale must comply with labeling laws where applicable. Food shall be in sound condition, free of spoilage, filth, or any other contamination and shall be safe for human consumption.

2. Only ice that has been made from potable (drinking) water shall be used or offered for sale. (see water supply.)

3. Food, whether raw or prepared, if removed from the original package or container shall be stored in a clean, covered, impervious and non-absorbent container, except during periods of preparation or service. Solid cuts of meat shall be protected by being covered during storage.
4. **Containers of food** shall be stored at least 6 inches above the floor in a manner that protects food from splash and contamination and permits easy cleaning of the floor.

5. **No food** can be stored in toilet rooms or vestibules.

6. No food, including packaged foods, shall be stored in contact with water or undrained ice. Wrapped sandwiches shall not be stored in direct contact with ice.

7. **Conveniently located refrigeration facilities** or effectively insulated facilities shall be provided to assure that potentially hazardous foods are maintained at 41°F or below. Potentially hazardous foods shall not be prepared in quantities so large that rapid cooling will not be possible.

8. **Potentially hazardous food requiring refrigeration after preparation shall be** rapidly cooled to internal temperatures of 41°F below. Potentially hazardous foods shall not be prepared in quantities so large that rapid cooling will not be possible.

9. **Stored frozen foods** shall be kept frozen.

10. Ice intended for human consumption shall be used to cool foods, food containers, or food utensils. **Ice** used for cooling stored foods and food containers shall not be used for human consumption.

11. **The internal hot holding temperature of potentially hazardous food shall be 135°F or above** except during necessary periods of preparation. Each hot storage unit must have an accurate thermometer available.

12. **Live or dead fish bait** shall be stored separately from food or food products.

13. A **product (stem type) thermometer** is needed to check internal temperatures of potentially hazardous foods.

14. **All food and equipment must be stored on the mobile unit.** Outside storage units or buildings may not be used to store food service equipment or food.

**EMPLOYEE HEALTH CONDITION REPORTING SIGN/AGREEMENT**
The state approved health condition reporting sign or the state approved health condition reporting agreement signed by each food employee must be available on the mobile food establishment for inspection by Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services’ food program investigators.

**UTENSILS**
Only **single service** (plastic or paper) utensils, tableware, plates, etc. shall be provided for customers.

**INSECT AND RODENT CONTROL**
All mobile food establishments shall be constructed in such a manner as to prevent the entrance of flies, dust, dirt, or other foreign matter. Mobile food establishments must be provided with tight fitting, solid, or screened doors or windows.

**TOLIET FACILITIES**
If a restroom is not provided on the mobile food establishment, toilet facilities must be located in a business establishment within 300 feet of the mobile food establishment. Written permission to use the restroom facility must be given by the property owner and may be included in the
notarized letter for permission to operate on property, if applicable. The written permission must remain on the mobile food establishment at all times. The mobile food establishment may not operate when the restroom facility is closed. Toilet facilities must meet all requirements of the Texas Food Establishment Rules. Port-a-cans are not acceptable restrooms.

FLOORS
1. Floors shall be constructed of smooth, easily cleanable materials such as ceramic tile, linoleum, or laminated wood.
2. Sawdust, wood shavings, peanut hulls, etc. are prohibited.
3. Mats and duckboards shall be non-absorbent and cleaned daily.

WALLS AND CEILINGS
1. Wall and ceilings shall be light colored, smooth, non-absorbent and easily cleanable.
2. Walls and ceilings (including doors, windows, skylights, etc.)
3. Construction studs and joist rafters shall be exposed in food preparation or storage areas.
4. Food preparation areas must have 50-feet candles of light.
5. All lights in food preparation areas must be shielded.

VENTILATION
The ventilation system shall be installed and operated according to law.

ANIMALS
Live animals shall be excluded from the surrounding areas of all mobile food establishments.

SINKS
1. A two-compartment sink with hot and cold running water under pressure is required. However, a three-compartment sink is recommended.
2. The hand lavatory must be accessible and convenient.

FRESH WATER AND WASTE WATER SYSTEMS
1. All mobile food establishments must have potable (drinking) water and the storage of potable water must be according to law. Fresh water must come from a source approved by Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services.
2. All mobile food establishments must have hot and cold running water under pressure. Hot water at a temperature of at least 100°F shall be provided to all fixtures at all times while the unit is in operation.
3. Fresh water must be provided in a self-contained system within the mobile food establishments
4. The water inlet shall be capped when not being used to fill a water tank.
5. Wastewater must be disposed of at an approved servicing area (commissary).
6. Wastewater shall be stored in a permanently installed retention tank that is sized at least 15% larger in capacity than the water supply tank and is sloped to drain. The drain pipe
must be at least 25 millimeters (1 inch) in inner diameter or greater and equipped with a shut-off valve.

CLEANING
1. All mobile food establishments where food and/or drink preparation is conducted on the unit must return to an approved commissary or servicing area in the 24 hours preceding each day of operation for cleaning and other services.
2. Documentation or a receipt showing that the mobile food establishment has been serviced in the 24 hours proceeding each day of operation must be kept on the unit.

COMMISSARIES AND SERVING AREAS
1. Food - All mobile food establishments must report to a permitted commissary or other permitted, fixed food establishment for food supplies. The commissary or other fixed food service establishment, used as a base of operations for mobile food units, shall be constructed and operated in compliance with the Texas Food Establishment Rules.
2. Cleaning, water, wastewater - All mobile food establishments must report to an approved servicing area for cleaning within 24 hours of each day of operation. The approved servicing area must provide a location for the flushing and drainage of liquid wastes separate from the location for fresh water servicing and for the loading and unloading of food and related supplies. An approved servicing area may be located at a commissary or fixed food establishment.
3. The surface of the servicing area shall be constructed of a smooth, non-absorbent material such as concrete or machine-laid asphalt and shall be maintained in good repair, kept clean and graded to drain.

VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS
1. All mobile food establishments shall be readily identifiable by business name, printed in bold black letters not less than 3 inches in height, not less than one and one half inches in width, permanently affixed, and prominently displayed upon at least 2 sides of the unit.
2. All mobile food establishments shall maintain a current Texas motor vehicle inspection sticker and a current Texas motor vehicle license plate registration sticker.

TO OPERATE ON PRIVATE PROPERTY
All mobile food establishments must have notarized, written permission from the property owner to operate on the property. The notarized, written permission must be in the unit and in plain view of the public at all times.