

TECHNICAL GUIDELINE NO. 165-

TITLE: MOBILE FOOD CARTS

Date: Nov 22, 2000
(Minor edits November 1, 2011)

Preamble:

The purpose of a technical guideline is to assure reasonable consistency and uniformity within and amongst the health districts when interpreting and/or applying environmental health regulations and their attendant standards or when responding to other agencies or government departments as part of a referral process.

While the Senior Public Health Inspectors have agreed to follow this guideline there may be unusual circumstances that arise to which the guideline may not be reasonably applied. In these situations variations from the guideline may be necessary.

The following guideline was accepted by the Senior Public Health Inspectors at their meeting dated September 2000.

Reference Regulation: Food Safety Regulations

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this guideline is to set out the minimum equipment and operational requirements for Mobile Food Carts that will meet the Food Safety Regulations and Public Eating Establishment Standards.

DEFINITIONS:

- 1) **Mobile Food Cart:** A food service unit intended for manual, non-motorized transport from an area where the unit is serviced to another area where the food is served. This term applies to units intended for the preparation of food, as well as those that are intended for the display and service of prepackaged food in its original container without further preparation.
- 2) **Potentially Hazardous Food:** food with a pH level or a water activity level, or a combination of pH level and water activity level that will support the growth of pathogenic micro-organisms or the production of toxins.
- 3) **Prepackaged Food:** Food that is packaged, wrapped, or otherwise contained as intended for service, prior to display or storage in or on a mobile food cart.

- 4) **Ready-To-Eat Food:** Food that does not require any further preparation before consumption, except perhaps thawing or reheating. Meat products must be prepared, preserved, and identified as ready-to-eat in accordance with the Meat Inspection Regulations 1990.
- 5) **Sealed:** Manufactured without openings to prevent entry or leakage of liquids.

APPROVAL

Application must be made to the local authority for approval and licencing. Health approval does not imply compliance with other by-laws or regulations. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary approvals and licences from local municipalities.

1. **Submission of Plans:** Plans and specifications for all food carts must be submitted for approval to the local authority.
2. **Application for Licence:** A written application for a Licence must accompany the plans and include the following information:
 - design and construction details for the cart
 - the types of foods to be sold and the preparation involved for each
 - the area where the food cart is intended to operate
 - source of water
 - details of the base of operation
 - site for disposal of wastes

MENU/TYPES OF FOODS

Carts are restricted to the preparation of non-potentially hazardous foods and ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods, requiring very limited preparation (i.e. seasoning, grilling, reheating, assembling finished products, etc.).

Raw meats (e.g. ground beef, chicken, pork, etc.) or other potentially hazardous foods that are not ready-to-eat are not permitted on any food cart.

Examples of ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods permitted to be prepared or sold on a food cart include hot dogs, commercially pre-cooked hamburger patties, commercially pre-cooked chicken burgers and non-potentially hazardous foods such as popcorn, confections, whole fruits, prepackaged ice cream and beverages.

Potentially hazardous foods that have been prepared and packaged in individual servings in facilities meeting the requirements of the Food Safety Regulations are permitted provided:

- they are stored at a temperature of less than or equal to 4°C (40°F) or greater than or equal to 60° (140°F) and;
- they are served directly in the unopened packaging and;
- they are properly labeled.

STRUCTURAL REQUIREMENTS

1. **Materials:** Food carts must be constructed of durable corrosion resistant materials and designed for easy cleaning with smooth, impervious surfaces.
2. **Design and Construction:** Food carts must be designed and constructed as a single self-contained unit able to operate without the use of detached tables and counters.
To ensure the safety of the operator and the public, deep fryers are prohibited on food carts.
3. **Refrigeration and Hot Holding Equipment:**
 - a. Refrigeration
Mechanical refrigeration (e.g. propane, 12-volt battery or generator) must be provided in all food carts for the storage of ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods, which is capable of maintaining these foods at 4° (40°F) or less and in the case of frozen foods at -18°C (0°F) or less. Food carts equipped with mechanical refrigeration have no limitations on operating hours.

Food carts selling hot dogs (wieners) only may use freezer gel packs or dry ice as a means of refrigeration for commercially prepared wieners. This does not apply to any other ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods.

Freezer gel packs or dry ice may be used in an icebox or other approved cooler, as means of refrigeration for pre-packaged, non-potentially hazardous foods. Natural ice is only permitted for the refrigeration of beverages. Melt water from natural ice is not to be drained onto the ground surface. Food carts using frozen gel packs or dry ice as a means of refrigeration have an eight-hour limit on operating hours per day (this is a recommendation contained in NSF Standard 59).
 - b. Hot Holding
Hot storage equipment must be provided for the storage of potentially hazardous foods that are not refrigerated which is sufficient in capacity and capable of maintaining an internal temperature of potentially hazardous foods at 60°C (140°F) or higher.
4. **Thermometer:** An accurate metal-stem, probe thermometer must be provided to monitor temperatures.
5. **Sinks:** At no time are sinks to be used for storage.

- a. Food carts shall have at least a two-compartment sink made of durable material (preferably stainless steel) with hot and cold running water. Each sink compartment must have a minimum opening of 139 mm (5 1/2 inches) and a minimum surface area of 3225.8 square mm (50 square inches) at the outer line. Sinks shall be a minimum of 101.6 mm (4 inches) deep. Food carts, which sell only non-potentially hazardous or prepackaged foods, may be exempted from the provisions of a two-compartment sink (example: prepackaged ice cream novelty items only).
- b. A separate hand wash sink must be provided and equipped with hot and cold running water. The sink must be equipped with soap in dispensers and paper towels. Food carts, which sell only non-potentially hazardous or prepackaged foods, may be exempted from the provisions of a handsink (example: prepackaged ice cream novelties only).

Where the operation does not require any direct handling of ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous foods and only requires minimal use of equipment/utensils in the preparation and handling of food (i.e. dispensing tongs for hot dogs) the requirement for a separate hand sink may be waved, and one of the compartments of the two-compartment sinks may be designated for this purpose.

6. **Water Supply:**

- a) An approved potable water source must be specified for all applications.
- b) Hot and cold potable water shall be provided on food preparation carts. It shall be supplied under pressure from a manual or mechanical pump unit, or by gravity with a mixing faucet.
- c) Hot water must be supplied at a minimum temperature of 43°C (110°F).

7. **Tanks:**

- a) A potable water tank with minimum storage capacity of 18.9L (4.2 gallons) must be provided. Routine sanitizing of the water tank is required.

A waste water holding tank shall be provided on food preparation carts. It shall have a minimum capacity of 28.4L (6.4 gallons) or 15 percent larger than the water supply tank, whichever is greater.

- b) The potable and waste water tanks must be designed to allow easy cleaning and sanitizing as well as sanitary filling and emptying.
- c) Liquid wastes must be disposed into the sanitary sewer.

8. **Protection of Food from Contamination:** All foods on the cart must be protected from contamination by covers, packaging, enclosed cases or food shields.

9. **Waste Disposal:** Carts must be equipped with at least one water-resistant, covered garbage receptacle of sufficient size for refuse generated by the operation.

OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

1. The licence shall be placed on the food cart for public view.
2. Ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods must be maintained at either less than 4°C or greater than 60°C at all times.
3. All prepackaged or ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods must be labeled with the date of preparation and name and address of establishment that it was prepared in.
4. Condiments must be dispensed by single service packaging, dispenser bottles or self-closing hinged containers.
5. All equipment, utensils, paper products, food, tanks, and cleaning supplies must be stored in or on the cart in an appropriate manner. Additional storage is limited to one ice chest (i.e., picnic cooler) for the storage of non-hazardous beverages with a maximum size of three cubic feet. Styrofoam coolers are not acceptable.
6. All work surfaces must be kept clean and sanitized throughout the day. Sanitized wiping cloths must be provided for use on the cart. Single use paper towels and a properly labeled plastic spray bottle containing a sanitizing solution are recommended: 100ppm chlorine solution = 1 fluid ounce of household bleach in 4.5 litres of water. Chlorine sanitizing solutions should be prepared and changed daily.
7. Food is to be served on single-service ware only. This ware must be stored and dispensed in a sanitary manner.
8. Reusable utensils (i.e., tongs, spoons, and lifters) should be cleaned and sanitized at least every two hours or as required.

BASE OF OPERATION

1. All food carts must have an approved base of operation. Food carts must be stored in the approved base of operation when not in use. Approval to operate a food cart or base of operation in a residential area must be obtained from the Municipality it is located in.
2. The food cart must return at least daily to the approved base of operation for cleaning and servicing.
3. The water tank is to be filled with potable water at the base of operation.
4. The wastewater holding tank is to be emptied at the base of operation.
5. A base of operation must have a designated area where the food cart can be secured and stored to protect it against the elements.
6. The base of operation must be equipped with cleaning facilities for the food cart. A minimum of a two-compartment sink with hot and cold running water, and drain boards is required.
7. The base must be equipped with mechanical refrigeration facilities adequate to meet the needs of the operation.

8. Food preparation, processing or packaging at the base of operation is permissible only in areas that has been approved for these purposes by the Public Health Inspector. Separation between the base of operation and living quarters is required.
9. All surfaces (i.e., floor, walls, ceiling, shelving, counters, etc.) must be easily cleanable and impervious to moisture.
10. Sufficient shelving is required for food storage.
11. A staff washroom must be available.

HYGIENE AND TRAINING

1. All operators of food carts must successfully complete a course in food sanitation approved by the local authority.
2. All foodhandlers must:
 - observe good personal hygiene
 - wear clean outer garments
 - keep hair controlled and confined
 - refrain from smoking while handling food
 - wash hands frequently