

Standard Operating Procedures for Mobile Food Establishments

Purpose

Mobile Food Establishments (MFE) can use this guidance document to help develop their own required Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) that support good retail practices which ensure the safe preparation, handling, storage and service of food. These procedures are designed to protect public health, prevent foodborne illness, and ensure compliance with all applicable, local, state and federal food safety regulations.

Scope

These standard practices apply to owners, operators and employees involved in the operation of mobile food establishments. They cover all aspects of mobile food operations, including but not limited to employee health, safe food and water sources, cleaning and sanitization, food temperature control, prevention of food contamination, storage, solid and liquid waste disposal, and proper set-up.



Employee health and hygiene

Employees must:

- Wash their hands after using the bathroom and after hands become soiled
- Cover cuts and wounds
- Wear hair restraints while working with food in preparation and cooking areas. Hair restraints must be made available to employees in these areas.

Employees must not:

- Work if they are sick
- Wear jewelry, except plain wedding bands

Hand washing stations must:

- Be near and easily accessible to any preparation/cook area
- Have a supply of soap, paper towels, running water, and a trash receptacle at all times
- Have “handwashing only” signage at or above the sink
- Have a designated/approved area to dispose of the wastewater

Hand sanitizer cannot be used in place of handwashing

Operations

Proof of purchase/source documentation for food, dry goods, and water

- Documentation like receipts, bills of lading, and shellfish tags **must be provided** to the local board of health (LBOH) inspector prior to starting operation
- Any additional purchases made during the duration of the event must be kept on site and made available at the request of the inspector. If proof cannot be provided, then it is considered an unapproved source, and you will not be able to serve the public
- All water used in the preparation and/or cooking of food and beverage items must come from an approved water source such as bottled water, water tanker, or city/town source.
- Ice must also come from an approved vendor
- If an ice machine is on site, it must be cleaned and sanitized prior to use and inspected by the local board of health prior to use. The ice scoop must be stored in a clean container while not in use.

Cleaning and sanitizing

- Food contact surfaces and in-use utensils must be cleaned and sanitized at a minimum of every 4 hours or more frequently if there is likely contamination
- Only food contact surface sanitizer can be used. Make sure to read the manufacturer’s label to confirm proper use.
- Ensure proper test strips are made available for the type of sanitizer you will use
- All bottles and buckets used for sanitizer or cleaner must be labeled to identify the contents, if not in their original packaging
- Sanitizer must be maintained and tested per the manufacturer's instructions. Measure the concentration of sanitizer after it has become soiled or diluted to



verify accuracy in parts per million (ppm). Adjust concentration or discard soiled sanitizer as required.

Food temperature control - refrigeration/cold holding units

- There must be enough cold holding units to ensure food remains at 41°F or below to support the amount of food being held for service.
- Equipment (such as coolers with ice and ice packs) must be sufficient in number and capacity to maintain temperatures
- Cold holding units must have an internal thermometer to demonstrate that the temperature inside the unit is below 41°F
- Operators must consider outside temperature and the opening and closing of the unit at busy levels of service. Limit opening of refrigeration units to maintain proper internal temperatures.
- If using Time as a Public Health Control, procedures must be provided to the local board of health for review. Reminder: cold foods can be held for up to 6 hours but must be discarded after that.

Food temperature control - cooking/hot holding

- A calibrated thermometer and alcohol wipes must be made available to the inspector and on site at all times
- All animal foods must be cooked and checked for the proper internal temperature to ensure they are cooked all the way through
- Consumer advisory must be prominently posted in the customer's view as per the Food Code requirements
- All hot holding units must hold a temperature of 135°F or above
- If using Time as a Public Health Control, procedures must be provided to the local board of health for review. Reminder: hot foods can only be left out at room temperature for up to 4 hours.

Food temperature control - reheating

- Food that is cooked and reheated for hot holding must be reheated so that all parts of the food reach a temperature of at least 165°F for 15 seconds
- Food that is reheated in a microwave oven for hot holding must be reheated so that all parts of the food reach a temperature of at least 165°F, and the food is rotated or stirred, covered, and allowed to stand covered for 2 minutes after reheating



- Ready-to-eat food from a commercially processed, hermetically sealed container or intact package from a food processing plant must be heated to a temperature of at least 135°F for hot holding.

Conformance with approved procedures

- Approval and compliance with the Variance, Specialized Process, and/or HACCP plan from the LBOH (Copy left on site)
- Calibration of test equipment and supplies, such as pH meter, buffering solutions, pH test strips, distilled water, etc., is required.

Prevention of food contamination

- Mobile units must be insect, rodent, and animal-free
- Contamination is prevented during food preparation and display
- Food on display must be packaged or otherwise protected by display cases or sneeze guards
- Food displays must be provided with the proper utensils
- If used, wiping cloths must be stored, dried, and handled appropriately
- Condiments must be protected from contamination by being kept in dispensers that are designed to provide protection, in their original containers designed for dispensing, or as individual packages and/or portions

Proper use of utensils and gloves

- No bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food
- The use of latex gloves is not recommended. Use food-grade gloves only.
- Single use gloves are used appropriately and discarded after one use.
- Single-use/single-service items are properly stored in clean, designated areas and used for their intended purposes
- In-use utensils are properly stored in their designated areas
- Utensils, equipment, and linens are properly stored, dried, and handled



Storage of food and dry goods

- Food and dry goods must be stored at least 6 inches above the floor/ground. Items cannot be stored directly on the floor/ground.

Waste removal

- Check with the event manager to see if waste removal options are available for your operation on site.
- If waste removal options are not available, you must determine and account for where the following items will be disposed of:
 - Wastewater
 - Solid waste/trash
 - Coal or wood embers from a smoker, grill, or pizza oven
 - Grease

Outside set-up

- Area must have overhead protection from environmental elements and contamination
- All equipment, dry goods, food, food prep, and cooking surfaces must be 6 inches off the ground

Electrical supply

- Check with the event manager to see where power can be accessed and/or if it is available for your operation
- If using, ensure your generator is working and able to provide the amount of power for your operation

Contingency planning

Excessive heat/hot weather

- Use ice, icepacks, or auxiliary refrigeration if temperatures rise. Know where to get ice from an approved source.
- Discard potentially hazardous foods if temperatures exceed safe limits
- Provide shade or ventilation for equipment and staff
- Ensure staff stay hydrated and take heat safety precautions



Loss of potable water

- Cease food preparation and service immediately
- Obtain potable water from an approved source such as bottled water, water tanker truck before resuming operations
- Notify the local board of health as required

Power outage/equipment failure

- Monitor food temperatures closely using a thermometer, including cold holding units
- Use alternative power (generator) if available
- Cease food operations if safe food temperatures cannot be maintained
- Notify the local board of health as required

Refrigeration failure

- Move food to backup refrigeration or ice-filled coolers
- Monitor temperatures continuously
- Discard food if held above 41°F for more than 4 hours

Severe weather/environmental hazards

- Cease operations during unsafe conditions such as storms, high winds, flooding, etc.
- Secure all equipment and food items
- Relocate or close unit as necessary for safety

For MA Retail Food Regulations, visit [Massachusetts retail food program information](#)

