Mobile Food Unit Construction Guide





2025

Mobile Food Unit Construction Guide

February 2025

Minneapolis
Health Department
Environmental Health Division
Food, Lodging and Pools
505 Fourth Ave. S., Room 520
Minneapolis, MN 55415
612-673-3000
healthreview@minneapolismn.gov
Minneapolis Food Plan Review

For reasonable accommodations or alternative formats please contact the Minneapolis Health Department at health@minneapolismn.gov or 612-673-2301.
People who are deaf or hard of hearing can use a relay service to call 311 at 612-673-3000. TTY users call 612-263-6850.
Para ayuda, llame al 311. Rau kev pab 311. Hadii aad Caawimaad u baahantahay wac 311.

Contents

Purpose 3
Definitions 3
Restrictions 3
Approved Source 3
Catering 3
Plan Submittal and Review 3
Plan review process 4
Required plan contents 4
Licensing and required inspection 5
General Equipment Information 6
Equipment design and construction 6
Equipment numbers and capacities 7
Equipment locations and installation 7
Unapproved equipment 7
Sinks 8
Handwashing sinks 8
Manual warewashing sink 8
Food preparation sink 8
Ventilation Systems 9
Counters, Cabinetry and Tables 9
Food-contact surfaces 9
Non-food-contact surfaces 10
Floors, Walls and Ceilings 10
Floors 10
Walls and ceilings 10
Utilities 11
Water supply 11
Drinking water and wastewater holding tanks, and water heaters 11
Sewage disposal 11
Utility service lines 11

Purpose

This guide will help individuals or groups submit plans for a mobile food unit (MFU) to the City of Minneapolis. Construction, equipment, and physical facility standards outlined in this guide are based on the minimum requirements of the Minnesota Food Code (http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/rules/foodcode/index.html).

Definitions

Mobile food unit

"Mobile food unit" means a food and beverage service establishment that is a vehicle mounted unit, motorized or trailered, operating at any one place with the approval of the regulatory authority as defined in Minnesota Rules, part 4626.0020, subpart 70.

Restrictions

Approved source

An MFU must not use or serve food that was stored or prepared in a private home. All food storage and preparation must occur in the MFU or in a licensed food establishment within the City of Minneapolis. All food must come from Approved Sources for Food Products (http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/apprvdsrcefs.pdf).

Catering

Preparing, storing, transporting, and serving large volumes of food at catered events presents increased food safety risks. Catering operations cannot be conducted from MFU unless approved by the regulatory authority and adequate provision is made for safe storage and handling of the large volume of foods associated with catered events.

Plan submittal and review

Plans must be submitted to City of Minneapolis at least 30 days before beginning construction, remodeling, or conversion of an existing vehicle to an MFU. If you begin work before plans are approved, the City may order work to stop when it determines work may lead to noncompliance.

Please contact the City at 612-673-3000 if you have questions about whether a plan review is needed for your MFU.

Plan review process

The City must review and approve your plans before you:

- Start the design, construction, or purchase of a new MFU.
- Remodel, alter, or expand MFU.
- Add or change gas or plumbing connected equipment in the MFU.

To start the review of your MFU plans or equipment changes, you MUST download and complete the City's food business plan review application (https://www.minneapolismn.gov/media/-www-content-assets/documents/Food-Plan-Review-Application-(July-2026).pdf). The completed application MUST be emailed to the City's Minneapolis Development Review (MDR) team at development@minneapolismn.gov.

Once MDR receives your application, they'll email you the link, instructions, and password to the City's ProjectDox website (https://pdx.minneapolismn.gov/Portal/Login/Index/Minneapolis-Prod). ProjectDox is the website the City uses to receive, review, and approve plans and documents.

You'll need to provide and upload all the required paperwork for your MFU in ProjectDox. See the "Required plan contents" section below for details of the required documents. You can also visit the City's food plan review website (https://www.minneapolismn.gov/business-services/business-assistance/run/food-safety/food-plan-review/) for details and information about the required documents, technical help, and resources.

MDR will forward your plan to the City's Health Dept for review and approval once they confirm you provided all the required paperwork. Plans are reviewed in the order they are received. If your application is incomplete, the review process may take longer. Your plan reviewer will notify you through the ProjectDox portal of any changes, plan revisions, information, or additional documents required. You'll also be notified through the ProjectDox portal when your plan review is complete and approved.

Wait to receive your plan approval notification and letter before beginning constructing or purchasing your MFU.

Required plan contents

Make sure to include all the following when you submit your completed plan review application and the required fees.

- The intended menu.
- A description of the proposed project including the anticipated volume of food to be stored, prepared, sold or served.
- Easy-to-read layout drawn to scale indicating the location of all equipment (e.g., cooking equipment, ventilation hood, refrigerators, food prep counters, handwashing sink(s), three-compartment sink, food prep sink, etc.)
- Finish materials for floors, base coves, walls, and ceilings.

- Proposed equipment list that includes types, manufacturers, and model numbers.
- Manufacturer's specification sheets for all equipment.
- Counters and cabinetry shop drawings, indicating cabinet construction, and countertop finish.
- Size of water heater, fresh water holding tank, and wastewater holding tank.
- The source of water for your MFU. Include unique well number for private systems.
- The method of sewage disposal for your MFU.

Additional information may be requested during the plan review process to allow for a thorough review. For further information, please visit the City Food Plan Review (https://www.minneapolismn.gov/business-services/business-assistance/run/food-safety/food-plan-review/) website, or contact the City at 612-673-3000.

Licensing and required inspection

After your plan is approved and your MFU project is near completion, follow these steps:

1. Apply for license.

Download and complete the City's **mobile food license application** (https://www.minneapolismn.gov/media/-www-content-assets/documents/Food-Truck-License-Application-11.2.2026.pdf). Email your application to the City's Business Licensing team at businesslicenses@minneapolismn.gov. Please follow the instructions on the application cover page. Make sure you provide all the documents listed on the application checklist. The City's Business Licensing team will inform you if your application is incomplete.

Please note the food **license application and fees** are different and separate from the **food plan review application and fees**.

2. Have your MFU inspected.

Contact your assigned plan reviewer and Business Licensing inspector 14 days before the first day you intend to operate your MFU to schedule the required final inspection. Bring the MFU to the location provided to you by your Licensing inspector. The City staff cannot conduct inspections at a private residence.

Have a copy of your approved plan and Health Dept approval letter. All equipment listed in your plan must be present, correctly installed, and operational prior to the final inspection.

3. Post the license in the MFU.

After a successful final inspection, the City will issue you a food license. Prominently post the food license in the MFU at all times. The license is valid for one year and must be renewed annually.

General equipment information

Include specifications, proposed locations and intended use for all new and used equipment in your submitted plan. Menu and food processes determine the type of equipment required. Complex food processes may require additional or specialized equipment.

Equipment design and construction

Some equipment must be certified or classified for sanitation by an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredited certification program for food service equipment and includes:

- Manual warewashing sinks
- Mechanical warewashing equipment
- Mechanical refrigeration units except for reach-in or chest freezers
- Walk-in freezers
- Food hot-holding equipment
- Cooking equipment, except for microwave ovens and toasters
- Ice machines
- Mechanical slicers
- Mechanical tenderizers and grinders
- Food preparation surfaces including sinks used for food preparation

If there is no certification or classification for sanitation by an ANSI accredited certification program for a piece of equipment, the equipment must be certified by ANSI equivalent agency and:

- Be designed for commercial use.
- Be durable, smooth, and easily cleanable.
- Be readily accessible for cleaning.
- Have food-contact surfaces that are not toxic.

Most common ANSI accredited certification programs

Certifying Group	Mark
NSF International (NSF)	
Intertek Marked “ETL Sanitation.”	
Underwriters Laboratory (UL) Marked “Classified UL EPH.”	
Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Marked “CSA Sanitation to NSF/ANSI.”	
Baking Industry Sanitation Standards Committee (BISSC) Marked “Certified BISSC.”	

Equipment numbers and capacities

Provide mechanical equipment that meets the cooking, cooling, re-heating, ventilation, and hot and cold holding needs of the MFU. Install and use equipment as intended by the manufacturer.

Some common circumstances with special equipment requirements include:

- Picnic coolers may not be used for food storage except for bottled and canned beverages that are not time/temperature control for safety (TCS) food.
- Food guards, display cases or other effective means must be provided to protect unpackaged food from contamination while on display.

Equipment locations and installation

Locate or install equipment so that food and food-contact surfaces are not exposed to contamination and the areas around and beneath the equipment are accessible for cleaning.

If equipment is not easily movable, seal it to the surface or mount it on legs. Four-inch legs are required for table-mounted equipment; six-inch legs are required for floor-mounted equipment.

Unapproved equipment

Examples of equipment that are frequently submitted but **not approved** include:

- Unfinished wood
- Household roasters/crock pots
- Galvanized food storage containers
- Enamelware
- Paintbrushes
- Wooden spoons
- Plastic tables
- Drills
- Non-food grade plastic containers
- Tubing or beverage cold plates in contact with stored ice

Sinks

Include specifications, proposed locations and intended use for all sinks.

Handwashing sinks

Provide at least one handwashing sink, either free standing or installed into an approved counter. Locate handwashing sinks to provide easy access for all employees who are:

- Preparing or dispensing food and beverages
- Conducting warewashing
- Using the toilet room

Each handwashing sink must be equipped to provide water under pressure at a temperature to allow handwashing for at least 15 seconds through a mixing valve or combination faucet. A self-closing, slow-closing, or metering faucet must provide a flow of water for at least 15 seconds without the need to reactivate the faucet.

Handwashing sinks in MFU must be permanently installed. Sinks MUST have splashguards to limit contamination of food, clean equipment and utensils, and single-service and single-use articles.

Manual warewashing sink

Warewashing sinks in MFU must include at least three compartments and drainboards on each end. All compartments and the drainboards must be part of the same piece of equipment. You cannot attach drainboards to meet this requirement. Utensil racks or tables may be required for storing all dirty and clean equipment and utensils.

Sink compartments must be large enough to allow immersion of the largest piece of equipment and utensils. If equipment or utensils are too large for the warewashing sink, alternative manual warewashing equipment must be used.

Warewashing sinks in MFU must be permanently installed. Manual warewashing sinks must be certified or classified for sanitation by an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredited certification program. Warewashing sinks in MFU may be either free standing or installed into an approved counter.

Food preparation sink

Provide a designated food preparation sink if the proposed menu includes a food product that requires washing or thawing in a sink.

Food preparation sinks must be certified or classified for sanitation by an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredited certification program.

Ventilation systems

Include specifications and proposed locations for ventilation hoods in submitted plans. Design and install ventilation systems according to Minnesota Rules, chapter 1346 (www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/1346/), Minnesota mechanical and fuel gas code. Minnesota Rules, part 1346.0507 (www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/1346.0507/) provides commercial kitchen hood requirements for some equipment.

Ventilation hood systems and devices must be sufficient in number and capacity to prevent grease or condensation from collecting on walls and ceilings. Adequate ventilation and make-up air is required for equipment that produces excessive steam, condensation, vapors, obnoxious or disagreeable odors, smoke and fumes.

Design ventilation systems to prevent grease or condensation from draining or dripping onto food, equipment, utensils, walls, ceiling, linens and single-service articles. Grease filters used in an exhaust ventilation hood or other grease extracting equipment must be designed to be readily removable for cleaning and/or replacing if not designed to be cleaned in place.

Counters, cabinetry and tables

Include specifications, proposed locations and intended uses for all tables, counters, cabinetry, and customer self-service areas in submitted plans.

Food-contact surfaces

A food-contact surface is a surface of equipment or utensil that directly contacts food. Food-contact surface also includes a surface of equipment or utensil from which food may drain, drip or splash, such as an interior of a reach-in cooler.

Plastic laminate surfaces or plastic tables are not acceptable as food preparation surfaces.

Food-contact surfaces must be certified or classified for sanitation by an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredited certification program.

Food-contact surfaces must be:

- Safe
- Durable, corrosion-resistant and nonabsorbent
- Sufficient in weight and thickness to withstand repeated warewashing
- Finished to have smooth, easily cleanable surface
- Resistant to pitting, chipping, crazing, scratching, scoring, distortion, and decomposition

Examples of activities requiring approved food-contact surfaces include:

- Chopping, cutting or mixing raw foods
- Cooking foods using equipment such as grills, deep fryers, flat tops, or ovens
- Assembling foods such as sandwiches or salads

Non-food-contact surfaces

A non-food-contact surface is a surface of equipment that does not directly contact food, such as surfaces of millwork and cabinetry. Non-food-contact surfaces of equipment that are exposed to splash, spillage, other food soiling or that require frequent cleaning must be constructed of a corrosion-resistant, nonabsorbent, and smooth material.

Non-food-contact surfaces must be free of unnecessary ledges, projections, and crevices, and designed and constructed to allow easy cleaning and maintenance.

Non-food-contact counters and cabinets can be plastic laminate or other nonabsorbent material. Unfinished wood is not allowed. All cutouts must be sealed by the manufacturer or countertop installer to prevent water damage to the interior of the counter or cabinet. Cabinets with enclosed hollow bases are prohibited.

Stainless steel, laminated top, or other equivalent nonabsorbent surfaces are allowed for some types of equipment.

Examples of areas with non-food-contact surfaces include:

- Beverage service areas for beverage dispensers such as espresso or coffee machines, or pop dispensers
- Customer self-service areas such as condiment display stations
- Cashier or ordering areas at bar or wait stations

Floors, walls, and ceilings

Include proposed finish materials for all floor, wall, and ceiling surfaces in submitted plans. Provide smooth, nonabsorbent, durable, and easily cleanable floors, walls and ceilings.

Prior to selecting floor, wall and ceiling surfaces, owners, design professionals, and others involved in preparing the plans should consider the following factors:

- Type and amount of use
- Type of soil and cleaning methods
- Life span of the surface

Floors

Select and install flooring surfaces that meet the needs of your MFU. Follow all manufacturer's recommendations.

Walls and ceilings

Select and install wall and ceiling surfaces that meet the needs of your MFU. Wall and ceiling surfaces must be smooth, durable, nonabsorbent, and easily cleanable.

Utilities

Provide utilities to meet the needs of your MFU. Include specific information for water supply, water heaters, sewage disposal system, and other utilities in submitted plans.

Water supply

Identify the source of the water for your MFU in submitted plans.

A safe and adequate supply of water must be provided to meet the needs of your food establishment. Water for your MFU must be obtained from a municipal water supply or a water supply that meets the requirements of Minnesota Rules, chapter 4720 (www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4720/), Public Water Supplies.

The water inlet must be protected from contamination and be designed to prevent attachment of a non-potable service connection. Hoses used to obtain water must be of food grade quality and be provided with an approved backflow preventer. Garden hoses are not allowed.

Drinking water and wastewater holding tanks, and water heaters

Drinking water tanks must be designed for holding potable water, be easily cleanable, of sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the operation and constructed of an approved food grade non-toxic material.

A wastewater, or grey water, holding tank must be provided which is sized 15 percent larger in capacity than the water supply tank. MFU must have wastewater and freshwater tanks permanently installed on the unit.

A water heater must be adequately sized to meet the demands of the MFU.

Sewage disposal

Identify the method of sewage disposal for your MFU in submitted plans. Provide a sewage disposal system that meets the peak sewage needs of your food establishment.

Wastewater must be removed in such a manner that a public health hazard or nuisance is not created. Wastewater must be discharged into a sanitary sewage system. Dumping any wastewater onto the ground or storm sewer is prohibited.

Utility service lines

Exposed utility service lines and pipes must be installed so they do not obstruct or prevent cleaning of the floors, walls, and ceilings. Electrical service must comply with Minnesota Rules, chapter 1315 (www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/1315/). Use the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry Electrical Inspector Directories (www.dli.mn.gov/business/electrical-contractors/electrical-inspector-directories) for more information about electrical requirements or call 651-284-5026.