

Commissary Exemption Operator Guide

For mobile food businesses applying to operate without a commissary

What is a commissary exemption?

Most mobile food businesses must use a commissary. Under Utah Administrative Rule R392-102-3(2), the Local Health Officer may exempt qualifying businesses. Utah County Health Department (UCHD) uses its Mobile Food Commissary Exemption Policy to evaluate requests from self-sufficient mobile food businesses. An exemption is not automatic and does not waive other food safety requirements.

Could my business qualify?

Businesses such as specialty soda carts, smoothie trailers, soft-serve ice cream trucks, kettle corn vendors, hot dog carts, and similar low-complexity operations may qualify. Eligibility depends on the actual menu, food processes, equipment, and servicing arrangements—not simply whether a business is Tier 1 or Tier 2.

Food operation limits

- All food preparation, food service, cleaning, and sanitizing must occur on the mobile unit.
- No cooling cooked time/temperature control for safety (TCS) foods for later service, sale, or storage.
- No handling, preparation, or processing of raw animal foods except for the cooking of commercially manufactured ready-to-cook animal foods.
- No specialized processing, reduced oxygen packaging, curing, smoking for preservation, fermentation, or other prohibited variance-requiring activities.
- The menu must be simple enough to prepare, hold, and serve safely with equipment on the mobile unit.
- Prepared food products may not be kept from one operating day to the next unless specifically approved by UCHD.

TCS foods are not automatically disqualifying. For example, milk, cream, soft-serve mix, hot dogs, cheese sauce, and smoothie ingredients may be acceptable when properly handled and the overall operation meets the policy.

What does “self-sufficient” mean?

Your mobile unit must have the equipment, facilities, storage, and procedures needed to operate safely without a commissary. UCHD will review and verify the following:

- Handwashing and adequate warewashing; refrigeration and hot holding where needed.
- Food from approved sources, with food and supplies stored on the unit or in an approved support vehicle.
- An approved, nonresidential potable water source and safe tank-filling method using dedicated food-grade hoses and fittings. Secondary/irrigation water and ordinary garden hoses are not acceptable.
- Adequate wastewater collection and an approved disposal location and method, including wastewater from cleaning floors and nonfood-contact surfaces.
- Proper refuse handling and approved used cooking oil disposal, if applicable. Ordinary refuse may be placed in residential trash collection where allowed by the collection provider.

How to apply

1. Complete the Mobile Food Commissary Exemption Application. Describe your full menu and food preparation processes.
2. Complete the Operational Service Plan. Identify potable water filling, wastewater disposal, cleaning wastewater, used cooking oil disposal (if applicable), and any support vehicle.
3. Submit both forms with your menu and any supporting documentation requested by UCHD, such as evidence that you can access a proposed servicing location.
4. UCHD reviews the application and Operational Service Plan and conducts the required initial verification inspection of the mobile unit and relevant arrangements.
5. Wait for written exemption approval before operating without a required commissary. UCHD may request corrections or additional documentation.

What makes a servicing location acceptable?

Potable water

Use only a UCHD-approved potable water filling location. Residential water filling is not approved under the current application process; secondary water is prohibited. Connections must be protected from contamination, and hoses and fittings must be dedicated to potable water—not previously used for gardening or vehicle washing.

Wastewater

The disposal location must be approved by UCHD and connected to an authorized sanitary sewer or other authorized wastewater system. Disposal must prevent spills, contamination, nuisance conditions, and discharge to the ground, storm drains, or waterways. Acceptance may depend on the characteristics of your wastewater and requirements of the sewer authority. You may be asked to document permission to use the location.

Support services

You may use an approved facility for water filling, wastewater disposal, dumpsters, or used cooking oil collection without necessarily using it as a full commissary. Your Operational Service Plan must describe the arrangements you actually use. A support vehicle may be used for approved storage or transport, but it is not a substitute food preparation or warewashing location.

After approval

- Maintain the approved menu, equipment, and Operational Service Plan; notify UCHD before changes that could affect eligibility.
- Keep servicing arrangements available for verification. The plan and exemption eligibility are subject to ongoing and annual review.
- Stop affected operations when critical equipment or services are unavailable until compliant operation can resume.
- The exemption is a conditional privilege, not a right. UCHD may suspend or revoke it for noncompliance; deliberate illegal operation or false information may affect future eligibility.

Before submitting: quick checklist

- ☐ Completed Commissary Exemption Application
- ☐ Completed Operational Service Plan with actual service locations and methods
- ☐ Complete menu and explanation of cooking, holding, and food handling
- ☐ Documentation of servicing access, if requested
- ☐ Mobile unit and any support vehicle available for verification

Questions or submissions: Contact the Utah County Health Department, Environmental Health Division, through its established mobile food permitting process. Do not assume an exemption has been granted until UCHD issues approval.

This guide summarizes the UCHD Mobile Food Commissary Exemption Policy. The signed policy and Utah Administrative Rule R392-102 control if there is a difference.