



Guidelines to obtaining a **MOBILE FOOD PREPARER** license

Please refer to [4-8-036](#) of the Municipal Code of Chicago for the complete ordinance.

What is a Mobile Food Preparer?

A Mobile Food Preparer (MFP) is any person who, by traveling from place to place upon the public ways, prepares and serves food from a mobile food vehicle.

Mobile Food Vehicle (MFV) Defined

A motorized vehicle registered as a commercial vehicle and shall not be used for any purposes other than a mobile food dispenser or mobile food preparer business.

Application and License Fee

\$1,000 application fee, 2-year term

License Application Requirements

- Complete a Business Information Sheet to include applicants full name, residence address, business address, e-mail, telephone number(s), date of birth and Social Security Number
- Government-issued photo ID from ALL applicants, owners, and business entity controlling persons and registered agents;
- Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN), State of Illinois File Number; Illinois Department of Revenue Account ID
- Name and address of the licensed commissary where the MFV will be cleaned and serviced and if the MFV will not be stored at the commissary, the name and address of the place where the MFV will be stored when not in use.
- A letter from the commissary stating that the servicing area meets the following requirements: has an overhead protection; has a location for the flushing and drainage of liquid waste which is separate from the location for water servicing and for the loading and unloading of food and related supplies; has a surface that is made of smooth non-absorbent materials such as concrete or machine-laid asphalt that is well-maintained and in good repair, kept clean and graded to drain; has a location for the sanitary discharge of liquid waste from the MFV; and has a storage bin for grease from the MFV, if applicable.
- City of Chicago Food Sanitation Manager Certificate issued to the applicant or the applicant's employee who will operate the MFV.
- A certificate of commercial general liability insurance with limits of not less than \$350,000.00 per occurrence, required for applicants that will use a propane tank or natural gas in the MFV.

Health Consultation Requirements

At the time of application at the BACP, the applicant must complete a consultation with a Sanitarian from the Department of Health to review the following:

- Proposed menu including a list of all food items the applicant intends to serve.
- Blueprints (plans) of the MFV.
- Specification sheets on equipment installed and used within the MFV.
- If the applicant is from outside of Chicago, then provide an inspection report from within the last 90 days from the state or local health authority where the food source or commissary is located.
- If the applicant utilizes a commissary that is outside of Chicago, then provide blueprints (plans) of the commissary,
- If the MFV has a gasoline, diesel or electric generator, propane or compressed natural gas, type II exhaust hood or fire suppression system, then applicants must also submit a MFV Fire Safety Permit application to the Chicago Fire Department (CFD) for approval.

Fire Safety Permit

All MFVs with a gasoline, diesel or electric generator, propane or compressed natural gas, type II exhaust hood or fire suppression system will need a Fire Safety Permit.



- **FIRE SAFETY PERMIT APPLICATION**

Applicants must submit a completed “MFV Fire Safety Permit Application” along with:

- A \$100.00 check or money order made payable to the “City of Chicago” for the MFV Fire Safety Permit Application Fee, and
- Any required documents. Please refer to the “MFV Fire Safety Permit Consultation Packet”.

- **APPLICATIONS WITH GASOLINE, DIESEL, PROPANE OR NATURAL GAS SYSTEMS**

Applicants with a gasoline, diesel, propane or natural gas system installed in their MFV, must register the MFV operator(s) for the required Fire Safety Class (FSC).

- Classes are conducted at the 2nd floor of the Bureau of Fire Prevention, 444 N. Dearborn, on Thursdays, at 9 a.m.
- Registration for, and rescheduling of, the FSC is done through your Small Business Center (SBC) Business Consultant.
- Attendees must bring a valid Driver’s License, State ID, or another Government-issued photo ID.
- Attendees should also bring a Combustible Gas Detector to learn how to properly check LP/CNG leaks in the MFV.
- Any owner or operator not receiving a Fire Safety Permit within a six (6) month period from their original FSC will need to repeat the class.
- Every Mobile Food Preparer (MFP) will need to provide written instructions explaining:
 - Ignition/start-up procedures for all on-board cooking equipment; and
 - Procedures for use of the Multi-Gas Detector, which increases the safety of MFP operators.

- **APPLICATIONS WITH FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEM**

Applicants with a Fire Suppression System (FSS) installed on their MFV must:

- Have the COMPANY that designed/installed their MFV’s fire suppression system submit MFV plans, on company letterhead, to the CFD at the Bureau of Fire Prevention Headquarters, 444 N. Dearborn, 2nd Floor.
- Forward a \$150.00 check, or money order, made payable to the “City of Chicago” for the FSS Plan Review.

- **ONSITE INSPECTION**

- An onsite inspection of the applicant’s MFV will be conducted with CDPH at 2133 W. Lexington, Chicago, Illinois.
- The onsite inspection will be scheduled by your Business Consultant.

- **PERMIT ISSUANCE**

A Fire Safety Permit will be issued once the following has been verified:

- The MFV has passed the onsite inspection.
- The owner and employees (MFV operators) have attended the Fire Safety Class, if applicable.
- All applicable CFD fees have been paid.

Inspections

- **On-Site Inspection:** After payment of the application fee, the MFV must be made available for inspection by the Department of Health, and if applicable, the Fire Department.
- **Operational Inspections:** Like any other restaurant or food establishment, after issuance of the license, MFVs will be subject to routine sanitation inspections at the discretion of the Department of Health. Such inspections will also include a fire safety compliance evaluation if using a gasoline, diesel or electric generator, propane or compressed natural gas, type II exhaust hood or fire suppression system.
- At time of license renewal, all MFVs are required to be inspected.

MFV Requirements

- The MFV shall be enclosed with a top and sides; the floor, walls and ceilings shall be of smooth, not readily corrodible, impervious materials capable of withstanding repeated washing and scrubbing and shall be finished in a light color.
- The MFV shall not be used for any purpose other than as a mobile food preparer.
- The MFV shall contain a hand washing sink and three compartment sink with a potable water under pressure; shall have a water storage tank that is self-draining and cleaned and flushed once every 24 hours; the water inlet shall be located so that it will not become contaminated and shall be provided with a transition connection of size or type that will prevent its use for other service; shall be equipped with a liquid retention tank that is 50 percent larger than the water storage tank and located in a separate area from the food storage or food-contact surfaces and emptied daily or more often if necessary an only into a sanitary drainage facility, not onto



the public way; shall have adequate mechanical refrigeration equipment that shall be capable of maintaining food or drink at temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit or less, if any food or drink is required to be kept cold; shall have adequate mechanical heating equipment that shall be capable of maintaining food or drink at a temperature of 140 degrees Fahrenheit or more, if any food or drink is required to be kept hot, or capable of heating food or drink to a temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit or more, if any food or drink is required to be heated.

- The MFV shall have the business name and license number legibly painted in letters and figures at least two inches in height in a conspicuous place on each lateral side of the MFV.
- The MFV shall maintain a suitable, tight, non-absorbent washable receptacle for refuse. The refuse receptacle shall be adjacent to, but not an integral part of, the MFV.
- The MFV shall be registered as a commercial vehicle and any person who operates such MFV must have a valid driver's license issued by the state of Illinois or another state, district or territory of the United States;
- The MFV shall be inspected and maintained by a licensed professional, including mechanics and, if applicable, by professionals who install and maintain fire prevention equipment, and propane tanks, as often as necessary but not less than every 90 days, and copies of the last four maintenance reports must be kept in the MFV at all times while the MFV is in use;
- **If propane is to be used in the MFV, there shall be no more than 40 pounds of propane in the MFV at any time.** The design and maintenance of the MFV must conform to CFD regulations as outlined in the applicant's fire safety permit.

Operational Requirements

- No food that is sold or served from a mobile food vehicle may be stored or prepared in a residential home. All operators must work in conjunction with a commissary or shared kitchen to store and prepare. All mobile food MFVs must also be stored at a commissary, or a Department of Health approved location.
- MFVs shall move from place to place upon the public ways and shall not be operated at a fixed location. Stops shall be made to service customers and shall not exceed a total of two hours or the maximum permitted period for parking, whichever is lesser, in anyone block.
- Hours of operation are 5AM – 2AM, unless otherwise allowed from a mobile food vehicle stand.
- MFVs may operate from a designated food stand not to exceed a 2-hour service limit. No other MFV may park or operate on such block of the designated stand.
- No MFV shall park or stand such vehicle within 200 feet of any principal customer entrance to a restaurant which is located on the street level with the exception of 12AM – 2AM.
- Mobile food vendors may operate on private property, not to exceed service limits of two hours, as long as; the property meets the applicable requirements of the Chicago Zoning Ordinance, and the property owner provides written permission to utilize the property.
- MFVs are not allowed on privately-owned vacant lots, or a lot of a vacant building.
- MFVs must be in a continual compliance with CFD regulations governing the use of a gasoline, diesel or electric generator, propane or compressed natural gas, type II exhaust hood or fire suppression system, and uphold the terms of the MFV's fire safety permit.
- Global Positioning System (GPS) requirements:
 - A. All MFVs must be equipped with an operational Global Positioning System (GPS) device. The device must meet the requirements set forth in Section 7-38-115 of the Municipal Code of the City of Chicago, as well as the following:
 1. The device must be permanently installed in, or on, the MFV.
 2. The device must be an "active", not "passive" device that sends real-time location data to a GPS service provider; the device is not required to send location data directly to the City.
 3. The device must be accurate no less than 95% of the time.
 4. The device must function while the MFV is vending food or otherwise open for business to the public, and when the MFV is being serviced at a commissary as required by Section 7-38-138 of the Municipal Code of the City of Chicago or these regulations. The device must function during these times regardless of whether the engine is on or off.
 5. When the GPS device is required to function, the device will transmit GPS coordinates to the GPS service provider no less frequently than once every five (5) minutes.
 - B. City personnel will not request location information from a GPS service provider pertaining to a mobile food vehicle unless:
 1. The information is sought to investigate a complaint of unsanitary or unsafe conditions, practices, or food or other products



- at the MFV;
2. The information is sought to investigate a food-related threat to public health;
 3. The information is sought in connection with establishing compliance with Chapter 7-38 of the Municipal Code of Chicago or the regulations promulgated thereunder;
 4. The information is sought for purposes of emergency preparation or response;
 5. The City has obtained a warrant or other court authorization to obtain the information; or
 6. The City has received permission from the licensee to obtain the information.
- C. The GPS service provider must maintain at least six (6) months of historical location information and be able to provide the following:
1. When requested, as per the regulations stated in section B of these GPS requirements, reports of each transmitted position including arrival dates, times, addresses, and duration of each stop, in a downloadable format (i.e. PDF, CVS or Excel). If the request is to provide the current location of a vehicle, the GPS service provider must respond immediately with the most recent location information for the MFV.
 2. Reports that provide anonymous, aggregate information regarding MFV operations within the City, and do not identify specific MFVs.
 3. An application programming interface (API) that is available to the general public.
- D. If the City establishes a website for displaying the real-time location of MFVs, for purposes of marketing and promotional efforts, the licensee may choose to provide the appropriate access information to the API of its GPS to enable the posting of the MFV's location on such website. The licensee is not required to provide such information or otherwise allow the City to display the MFV's location.
- E. The following will serve as evidence that the GPS requirements have been met:
1. Proof of GPS installation.
 2. Proof from a GPS tracking device service provider the operator is in compliance with the requirements as stated in Rule 8 of the MFV Rules and Regulations.

How do I apply?

You may apply **in-person** at BACP's Small Business Center, 121 North LaSalle Street, Room 800.

- Application intake hours are from 8:30 AM through 3:30 PM, Monday through Friday.
- An appointment is recommended, and can be made:
 - Online at www.cityofchicago.org/sbc > Starting Your Business > Schedule An Appointment, or
 - Call (312) 74-GOBIZ / 744-6249.

Free Vehicle Assessment

To help MFV license applicants prepare for the Department of Public Health (CDPH) and, if applicable, Chicago Fire Department (CFD) inspections, we are providing a FREE Mobile Food Vehicle (MFV) Assessment prior to, or during, the license application process.

The MFV Assessment consists of a mobile food vehicle review by CDPH and CFD inspectors, who will provide applicants with an inspection report explaining the results of their compliance assessment. Please be sure that your MFV is fully functional so that the inspectors may review every part of the MFV appropriately. Specifically:

- There must be a permanent divide between the front driving area and the back cook/prep area;
- All equipment must be up and running at the proper temperatures including the water which must be of sufficient quantity for assessment purposes;
- All Mobile Food Preparer trucks must have a grease trap under the three compartment sink.

MFV Assessments are conducted by appointment only. Appointments can be made through your SBC Business Consultant, or by calling 312.74.GOBIZ / 744.6249.

