

Starting a Food Truck, Trailer or Cart in Marin County

An annual operating permit is required to operate a Mobile Food Facility (MFF) in Marin County. Environmental Health Services issues permits for all Mobile Food Facilities (trailers, carts, trucks). An operating permit fee is required along with an application each year. Construction and operation requirements for a MFF are based on the California Retail Food Code (Cal Code).

If you are thinking of purchasing or building a Mobile Food Facility (MFF) and operating within the County of Marin, there are several factors that should be considered before you purchase or invest. For more information, contact Marin County EHS at 415-473-6907 or visit our website at <https://www.marincounty.org/depts/cd/divisions/environmental-health-services/food-program/mobile-food-facilities>

- **Location:** Cities have different rules for parking and sales whether on private or public property. Contact the city to verify approved locations for operating.
- **Commissary:** All MFFs are required to operate in conjunction with a commissary or approved commercial kitchen. Ideally, the commissary is located close to the operating sites.
- **State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD):** HCD the state agency that inspects all occupied MFFs. All occupied MFFs (trucks, trailers) require an inspection by HCD after construction and after any major modification. A small, metallic insignia is issued and placed inside the MFF.
- **New MFF:** There are many fabricators of Mobile Food Facilities, but the ones located in California are more familiar with Code requirements and usually work with the State Department of Housing and Community Development. If you plan on constructing your own MFF, you will need to familiarize yourself with Environmental Health Services Department and HCD building requirements. In either case mentioned above, plans must be submitted to Environmental Health Services prior to construction. Please inquire with EHS staff regarding current Plan Review fees.
- **Used MFF:** Although a used MFF means a smaller investment, it is important to verify that it has a recent approved permit preferably from a local county and a VALID HCD insignia. Assure any modifications were made with approval from the local county EHS. It is also important to review inspection reports to verify that equipment is working properly. These reports are public record and available at the local EHS office. A used MFF will still require an initial inspection and possibly a plan review when you apply for a permit.
- **Menu:** The menu should be somewhat simple as MFFs are limited in refrigeration, food preparation space, cooking equipment, and water. The commissary should be utilized for most food preparation. Simple menus with less ingredients and steps promote food safety as well as efficient ease of service.
- **Carts** are allowed only for limited food preparation such as hot dogs, tamales, and coffee service. Some may require a 3-compartment sink along with the handwash sink. Carts selling 100% pre-packaged food do not require a hand-wash sink.
- **Certified Food Manager Certificate** is required to operate a MFF.

Application and approval process - please refer to the following flow chart.

All County publications are available in alternative formats (Braille, Large Print, or CD), upon request. Requests for accommodations may be made by calling (415) 473-4381 (Voice) (415) 473-3232 (TDD/TTY) or by e-mail at disabilityaccess@marincounty.org. Copies of documents are available in alternative formats, upon request.



