



# HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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# HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT BUREAU OF CONSUMER HEALTH SERVICES MOBILE FOOD UNIT PROGRAM OVERVIEW March 3, 2025



Christopher Sparks – Bureau Chief  
Renee L. Beckham – Program Chief Sanitarian  
DonMonique Thompson – Program Supervisor

# AGENDA

1. Health Department regulations/requirements for food trucks – THE BIG PICTURE
2. Process for obtaining a City of Houston Mobile Food Unit Medallion
3. Maintaining medallion during permitted period
4. Mobile Food Unit Program inspection team
  - Team inspection assignments/coverage areas
  - Enforcement actions for unpermitted mobile food units
5. Count - Mobile food units with medallions
6. Common violations
7. Help for the program
8. Ordinance changes

# MOBILE FOOD UNIT REGULATIONS

- Code of Ordinances (Food Ordinance): Chapter 20 - Food and Drugs- Articles I and II
- No food service establishment or food processing establishment shall be operated within the city unless it conforms with the requirements of this article.
- Mobile food units (MFU) are “food service establishments”.
- Definition: A food service establishment that is vehicle-mounted or wheeled and is capable of being readily moveable.
- Section 20-22 outlines the operational requirements for mobile food units and commissaries.
- Mandate-MFU’s must be inspected at least once a year, with additional inspections as needed for enforcement, compliance, complaints, or FBI outbreaks.

# OBTAINING A COH MEDALLION



For the purpose of this presentation, the type of mobile food units discussed are “unrestricted conventional”- trucks/trailers/vans engaging in preparation of foods/beverages

Standard operational procedures and drawings required

- Applicant submits plans and menu disclosure to the Consumer Health Permit Office – review fee assessed
- Plans rejected: email sent to operator identifying corrections needed and resubmit for additional review. No additional fee assessed.
- Plans approved: email sent to operator with Approved-Stamp plans and instructions for online scheduling of pre-opening inspection and required documents (including State of Texas Sales Tax Permit) to be submitted
- Preopening inspections conducted at Environmental Inspection Center-7427 Park Place Blvd by the VIP team.
- Passes Inspection including HFD: Medallion and GEO Tracking device affixed to the mobile food unit. Medallion is valid for 1 year. Medallion color changed every year.

# REQUIRED DOCUMENTS: POSTED OR AVAILABLE



**HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

### Mobile Food Unit Property Agreement Letter

(Complete all Parts of this Letter)

Account Number: [Redacted]

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (First, Last Name of Person signing Letter) (Write "Owner or Manager")  
of the following property \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Business)  
located at \_\_\_\_\_ (Give full Address, Number and Street/City, State and Zip Code) give permission to  
\_\_\_\_\_ (First, Last Name of Mobile Unit Owner) of \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Mobile Food Unit)  
to operate the mobile unit on the above stated property for the period:  
Beginning on \_\_\_\_\_ (Start Date for the Agreement) And Ending on \_\_\_\_\_ (End Date for the Agreement)  
Property Owner's Name (if signer is not the owner): \_\_\_\_\_  
Property Owner's Address (required): \_\_\_\_\_  
Property Owner's Phone # (required): \_\_\_\_\_  
Property Owner's Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Owner / Representative: FIRST MIDDLE LAST  
Signature of Owner / Representative \*\* \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Notary \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Note: \*\*The end date shall not exceed the expiration date of the unit's current mobile food medallion.  
\*\* The person signing this letter must be the property owner or someone with the legal authority to authorize property use on behalf of the owner. (i.e. having signed a lease whose contract authorized sub-letting of the property). Falsification of any information provided on this document by any party will make this agreement null and void and may result in the revocation of the mobile food unit's medallion.  
THIS DOCUMENT IS REQUIRED TO BE POSTED IN PLAIN VIEW OF THE PUBLIC IN THE MOBILE FOOD UNIT AT ALL TIMES

**HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
8000 North Stadium Drive Houston, TX 77064  
832-389-5100  
CHD@houstontx.gov  
HOUSTONCONSUMER.ORG

Property Use Authorization Letter – signed and notarized. **Required to be posted in view of the public.**

**HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

### Mobile Food Unit Restroom Availability Letter

(Complete all Parts of this Letter)

Account Number: [Redacted]

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (First, Last Name of Person signing Letter) (Write "Owner or Manager")  
of the following business \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Business)  
located at \_\_\_\_\_ (Give full Address, Number and Street/City, State and Zip Code) give permission to  
\_\_\_\_\_ (First, Last Name of Mobile Unit Owner) of \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Mobile Food Unit)  
and his/her employees to use the restroom located within my business. This restroom is located within 500 feet of where the mobile food unit will operate at:  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Record Full Address, Number and Street/City, State and Zip Code where Unit will operate)  
The restroom is available on the following days: \_\_\_\_\_ and hours: \_\_\_\_\_ (Record Days of the Week) (Record Hours and indicate AM or PM)  
THE CITY OF HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT INSPECTOR HAS MY PERMISSION TO ENTER FOR THE PURPOSE OF INSPECTING THIS RESTROOM. THE RESTROOM SHALL BE MAINTAINED CLEAN AND PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING FACILITIES: (WORKING TOILET, TOILET PAPER, HAND SINK WITH HOT AND COLD RUNNING WATER, SOAP, PAPER TOWELS OR HAND DRYER)  
Printed Name of Business Owner or Manager: FIRST MIDDLE LAST  
Signature of Business Owner or Manager: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Owner/Manager's Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_  
Business Owner's email address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Notes: This agreement shall be valid only through the expiration date of the unit's mobile food medallion. Falsification of any information provided on this document by any party will make this agreement null and void and may result in the revocation of the mobile food unit's medallion.  
THIS DOCUMENT IS REQUIRED TO BE POSTED IN PLAIN VIEW OF THE PUBLIC IN THE MOBILE FOOD UNIT AT ALL TIMES

**HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
8000 North Stadium Drive Houston, TX 77064  
832-389-5100  
CHD@houstontx.gov  
HOUSTONCONSUMER.ORG

Restroom Availability Letter – signed. Requires mobile food unit employees to have access to the designated restroom during time mobile unit is in operation. Access must be proven at time of inspection. **Letter required to be posted in view of the public.**

Houston Health Department  
Food Manager's Certification Training Program  
Certifies That

Has Satisfactorily Completed the Course of Instruction Presented in Section 216.10, 216.14 of the Houston City Code in Compliance with the Professional Food Sanitation and Service Code

Certificate Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Expires: \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY OF HOUSTON**  
FOOD SERVICE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

**Food Service Manager's Certification required to be posted in view of the public.**  
Individual required to be present during food operational activities.

**HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

### Food Manager Certification

awarded to  
**Gerald Anderson**  
Texas Food Manager Exam

6314-0778671  
Nov 15, 2019

**Congratulations!**  
You are certified as a food safety manager in the State of Texas. This certificate allows credit towards fee payments.  
The medallion used and is valid as a Food Manager Certification within the City of Houston. The medallion expires upon expiration of the certificate. The medallion is not valid until you are certified in the City on your behalf by a local authority.

**Felicitaciones!**  
Usted está certificado como gerente de operaciones alimentarias en el Estado de Texas. Este certificado le permite acreditar los pagos de la licencia.  
El medallón utilizado es válido como Certificación para Gerente de Operaciones dentro de la Ciudad de Houston. El medallón no es válido hasta que sea certificado en la Ciudad por la Autoridad de Sanidad Administrativa. La certificación medallón no es válida hasta que sea otorgada por la autoridad local.

**CITY OF HOUSTON**  
FOOD SERVICE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

**CITY OF HOUSTON**  
Houston Fire Department Permit Office  
1002 Washington Ave., 2nd Floor, Houston, TX 77002  
P.O. Box 3625, Houston, TX 77253 phone: 832-384-8111  
www.houstonfirepermitcenter.org

**RECEIVED**  
AUG 12 2018

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PAYMENT RECEIVED**

This is an acknowledgment that the Permit Office of the Houston Fire Department received your application and fee for the Gas Service Permit. This approval is for a general Gas service on a temporary basis. The Houston Fire Department does not guarantee the accuracy of the information provided on this form. It is not correct, please print these corrections below and return this form in the correct envelope. If you need further assistance, call the Permit Office Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

CUSTOMER: RICOS TACOS MOBIL  
599 BISSONNET ST # 37  
HOUSTON, TX 77061

LOCATION: 404 BOONE RD  
HOUSTON, TX 77072

PERMIT NUMBER: FMA24022206

INSPECTION NUMBER: 477395

FEES PAID:

Admin	ADMINISTRATIVE FEE	\$32.16
11	LIQUID GAS USE ON MOBILE FOOD	\$102.96
	TOTAL PAID:	\$135.14

7/30/2024

L.P. Gas Permit – issued by HFD. **Required to be available for inspection.**

Houston Health Department  
Food Handler Training Program  
Certifies That

Has Satisfactorily Completed the Course of Instruction Presented in Section 216.10, 216.14 of the Houston City Code in Compliance with the Professional Food Sanitation and Service Code

Certificate Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Expires: \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY OF HOUSTON**  
FOOD SERVICE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Food Handler Training Certificates – required food employees who are not food service managers. **Certificates maintained (not posted) on mobile food unit.**

**HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

### Certificate of Training

**Arianna String**  
City of Houston Food Handler Program

62318-187942  
Sep 29, 2019

**HUYEN HOANG**  
Sep 29, 2019

**CITY OF HOUSTON**  
FOOD SERVICE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

- Consists of 3 inspectors
- Field inspections of MFU's and 17 COH-approved commissaries
- Inspections- Required at least once every 12 months  
(does not include pre-opening/renewal/change of ownership inspections)
- Additional inspections
  - Conducted as necessary for the enforcement of the Houston Food Ordinance
  - Based on the public health risks and/or past compliance history.  
(Follow-up Routine Inspection, Re-inspection, or Consultative Visit)
  - Department receives consumer complaints and/or reports of foodborne illness.

# MOBILE FOOD UNIT ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS



Utilize enforcement actions during inspections (MFU's with valid medallions and illegal MFU'S)

- Issue municipal court citations
- Implement temporary closures

MFU operations have presented as a fast-growing industry in the COH. Currently, HHD does not have a tool to pinpoint an estimate of illegal mobile food units. Based on the consumer complaints received, our program has investigated over 1200 locations throughout the COH since 1/10/2009.

ILLEGAL MOBILE FOOD UNIT COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS				
	2025 <small>(as of 2/19/2025)</small>	2024	2023	2022
Approximate # Mobile Food Units*	25	304	299	232

\* At least 1 mobile food unit investigated

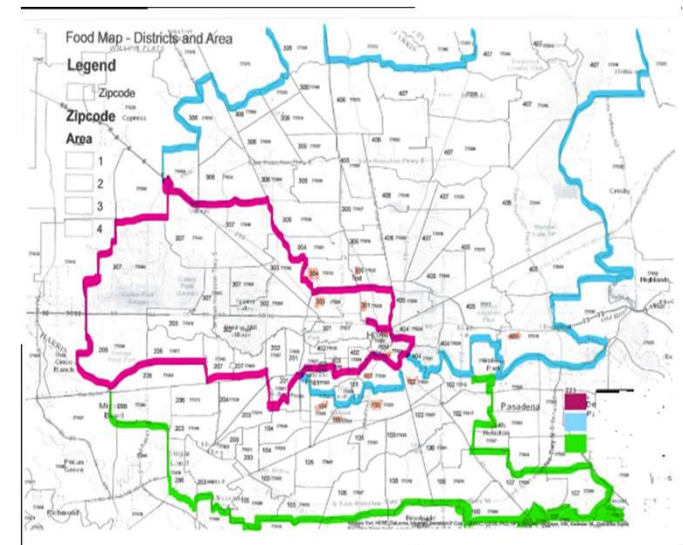


# MOBILE FOOD UNIT NUMBERS AND COVERAGE AREAS



Inspector		Inspector 2		Inspector 3	
District	# Units in District	District	# Units in District	District	# Units in District
201	53	102	55	101	155
202	41	103	52	304	27
205	16	104	24	305	90
207	41	105	74	306	26
301	72	106	39	404	47
302	32	107	40	405	68
303	47	203	70	406	39
307	53	204	59	407	17
401	36	206	37		
402	43				
403	16				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>469</b>

**TOTAL # OF PERMITTED MOBILE FOOD UNITS = 1,369**



# Inspection #'s



**Goal: 4 inspections\* per day.**

**Requirement: 70 inspections\* per month.**

\*Include routine, re-inspections, complaints, or New/Change of Ownership fixed location medallion inspections

# MOBILE FOOD UNIT COMMON VIOLATIONS

## January 1, 2024-February 15, 2025



*Table reflects both permitted and unpermitted mobile food units.*

Violation Number	Description	Violation Frequency
20-21.01	Food Sources/Safe	93
20-21.02	Food Protection	130
20-21.03	Food Storage	543
20-21.04	Food Preparation	709
20-21.08	Personal Cleanliness	389
20-21.11	Equipment Cleaning	672
20-21.17	Plumbing	74
20-21.19	Hand Washing Sinks	991
20-21.21	Insects/Rodents	625
20-21.15	Water Supply	151
20-22( c)(03)	Location of Operation	28
20-22( c)(05)	Access to Toilets	341
20-22 ( c) (04)	Operation on Private Property	237
20-22(e)	Commissaries/servicing records	646
20-37	Medallion(Permit)	201
20-53	Food Manager/Handler	705
20-19(b)	Compliance	661
47-741	Discharge into MS4	28

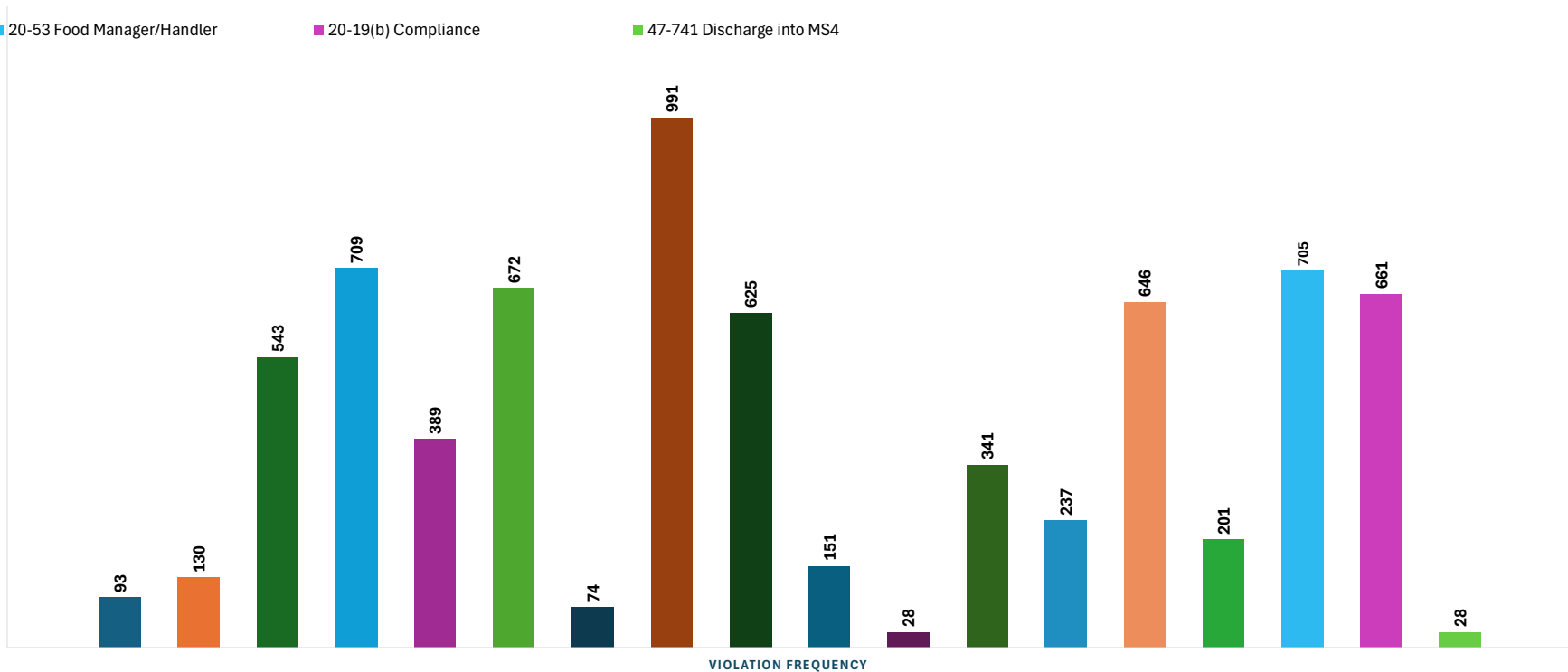
Violations which impact the safety of foods, employee practices, protection, storage, water supply, cleanliness.

Violations specific to mobile food unit operations and commissary services, illegal discharges

# MOBILE FOOD UNIT COMMON VIOLATIONS JANUARY 1, 2024 – FEBRUARY 16, 2025



- 20-21.01 Food Sources Safe
- 20-21.02 Food Protection
- 20-21.03 Food Storage
- 20-21.04 Food Preparation
- 20-21.08 Personal Cleanliness
- 20-21.11 Equipment Cleaning
- 20-21.17 Plumbing
- 20-21.19 Hand Washing Sinks
- 20-21.21 Insects/Rodents
- 20-21.15 Water Supply
- 20-22(c)(03) Location of Operation
- 20-22(c)(05) Access to Toilets
- 20-22(c)(04) Operation Private Property
- 20-22(e) Commissaries/servicing records
- 20-37 Medallion(Permit)
- 20-53 Food Manager/Handler
- 20-19(b) Compliance
- 47-741 Discharge into MS4



# HELP AND ORDINANCE CHANGES



- ❖ There are operations all throughout the COH both permitted and non-permitted. Additional staff is needed to keep the pace with the growth and to remove illegal operations that jeopardize public health.
- ❖ Engage other departments to inspect mobile food units such as HFD for hazards related to propane tanks, distances between units, disposal of charcoal/wood burning elements.
- ❖ The bureau is in the process of drafting a Food Truck Park ordinance utilizing those already in place in Ft. Bend, El Campo, TX, and Shreveport, LA for guidance.
- ❖ The bureau is in the process of revising/adopting the FDA2022 Model Food Code which includes mobile food units.
- ❖ Current proposed Texas legislation may inhibit local jurisdictions from applying more stricter requirements regarding mobile food units.

# Complaints



Please visit the link below to access the Houston Health Department's online complaint form or contact our permit office directly at 832-393-5100 to file a complaint over the phone. Complaints will be assigned a complaint ID #, investigated, and you will be notified of the findings (if not anonymous).

<https://www.houstonconsumer.org/services/permits/complaint-comment-form>



Thank you!

Questions?