



CHARLESTON FIRE DEPARTMENT



Fire Marshal Division

Information Bulletin

Mobile Food Vendors

Mobile food vendors have grown in popularity and have become a routine attraction at special events and local venues. Our goal is to ensure these operations are conducted in a safe manner, reducing potential hazards that may threaten public safety, while assisting the business with continuity of their operation.

Routine inspections will be conducted for mobile food vendors to identify and eliminate basic fire hazards, educate vendors on potential hazards, and promote a safe and livable community. Vendors must submit a completed Mobile Food Vendor Permit Application, successfully pass the inspection, and receive the necessary permits before commencing operations. This permit does not replace the vendor's obligation to obtain a City Business License or coordinate and comply with Zoning requirements.

South Carolina Fire Code:

The 2021 South Carolina Fire Code (SCFC) includes regulations for Mobile Food Preparation Vehicles and was mandated for statewide adoption on January 1, 2023. A self-survey has been created (contained in this packet) to assist with achieving and maintaining compliance with some of the common issues impacting mobile vendors. Some of the significant changes contained within the latest edition of the code include:

- Operations that produce grease-laden vapors will require the installation of an exhaust hood that is protected by an automatic fire extinguishing system.
- LP- gas alarms will be required in vehicles near LP-gas components.
- Fuel gas systems shall be inspected annually by an approved inspection agency. Once the inspection takes place and passed, a sticker must be placed on the gas system indicating the name of the inspection agency and the date the satisfactory inspection took place.

Application:

Interested vendors will need to complete the Mobile Food Vendor Permit Application. Our goal is to process all complete applications within approximately 6 business days and then schedule your inspection after all fees have been paid. We encourage all applicants to utilize the [Customer Self Service \(CSS\)](#) portal to submit applications, receive updates, schedule inspections, pay fees, and expedite the process. *Paper applications will not be accepted after January 1, 2024.*

Category of Mobile Food Vendors

- *Category A* includes a cart, trailer, tent, vehicle or similar and do not cook or warm food and do not utilize any portable power, including caterers or canteens or similar who prep food off site and serve at an outdoor special event or gathering. This program excludes vendors who are selling commercially pre-packaged beverages or snacks, stocking vending machines, or similar activities.
- *Category B* includes a cart, trailer, tent, vehicle or similar and warm or reheat food and/or utilize portable power or fuel systems.
- *Category C* includes a cart, trailer, tent, vehicle or similar and conduct mobile food preparation that includes cooking of foods (producing grease laden vapors).

Operational Permit:

The operational permit sticker is valid for 12 months and will be affixed to the unit by the inspector and must remain visible. Additionally, the vendor must print their approved permit, City Business License (CBL), and maintain the documentation outlined on the application during all hours of operation. Permitted vehicles are subject to inspection at any time the vehicle is operating.

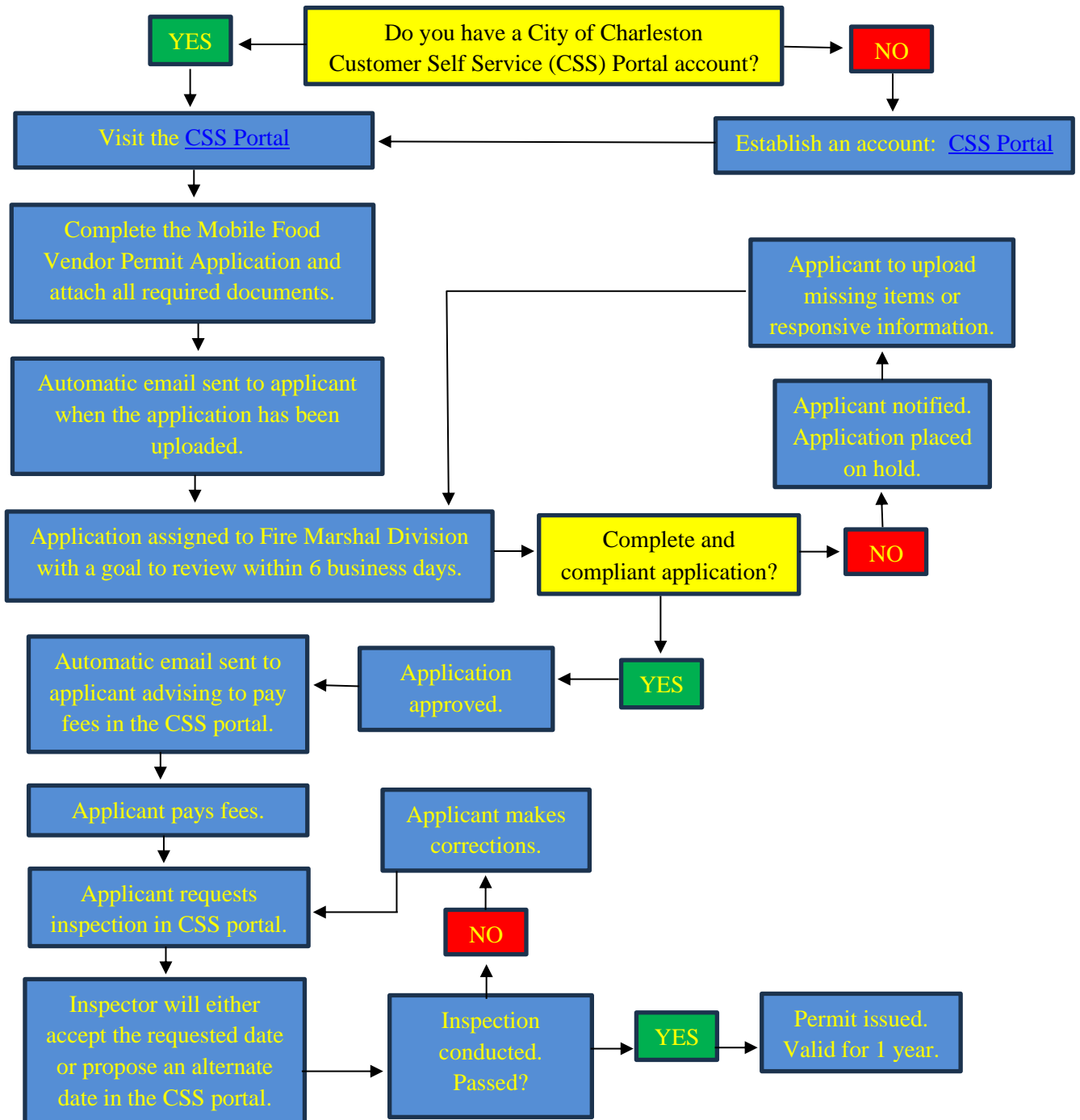
Permit Renewal:

Operational permits must be renewed at least every 12 months and may be revoked prior to the expiration date. It is the responsibility of the mobile food vendor operator to renew the permit.

Process:

Once a complete application packet has been entered into the system, which includes all associated documents, the applicant will receive an automated email advising the review is underway. Upon completion of the initial review, the applicant will receive either notification of missing documentation or notification to pay the associated fees and schedule the inspection through the CSS portal. The applicant may then request an inspection through the CSS portal. Inspections are typically conducted at 2 George Street within three business days of the request, but subject to the availability of our team. Upon completion, a mobile food vendor sticker will be issued.

Applicants can check the status of the permit at any time by logging into their [CSS](#) account. Additional questions that cannot be answered through the portal may be directed to CFD@charleston-sc.gov or 843-724-3429.



Mobile Food Vendor Fire Safety Self-Survey	Address: _____
	Business Name: _____
	Employee completing survey: _____ Date: _____

This document is provided as a courtesy to assist you with identifying routine fire safety issues and general compliance but may not be all inclusive. These surveys improve safety by eliminating basic fire hazards, educating employees on hazards, and helping to ensure a safe and livable community. The list below is intended to act as a guide to help you begin promoting fire safety.

A. SETUP	N/A	YES	NO
1. Ensure that emergency access routes are free and unimpeded to allow for emergency personnel to gain access.			
2. Confirm the mobile food vendor is located at least 10 feet from other mobile food vendors.			
3. Verify the mobile food vendor is located at least 10 feet from other buildings.			
4. Mobile food vendors are located at least 10 feet from hydrants.			
B. GENERATOR			
1. The generator must be located at least 10 feet from hydrants.			
2. Generator is set up in a way that keeps the fumes from the surrounding buildings and vendors.			
3. When possible, generators are located downwind.			
4. If refueling is necessary, establish a refueling plan for the generators or similar items.			
5. Onsite fuel kept in an approved safety can or removed from the area.			
C. PROPANE			
1. Ensure that all propane tanks are properly mounted or secured while in use or in the general area.			
2. The propane shutoff valves must always be accessible to ensure they can be utilized if needed.			
3. Propane hoses and connections must be in good repair and free from leaks.			
4. The maximum aggregate capacity of LP-gas containers transported on the vehicle shall not exceed 200 pounds (91kg).			
5. A listed LP-gas alarm is installed near LP-gas components, per manufacturer's instructions.			
6. LP-gas alarm has a manufacture date of less than 10 years old.			
7. LP-gas containers have been inspected by an approved inspection agency.			
D. ELECTRICAL			
1. Extension cords are only used on a temporary basis, only for portable items, never in place of permanent wiring.			
2. Breaker box does not have any open slots or circuits, circuits are clearly labeled, breaker cover(s) remain closed.			
3. All electrical junction box covers, outlet covers, and switch plates are secured in place.			
4. Electrical panel must always be kept clear and accessible.			
5. Extension cords must be in good repair, free from any obvious damage to the cord or the plugs.			
6. Grounding must take place when required during the use of an extension cord.			
E. EXIT PATH			
1. The egress path must always be clear of any obstructions to include during food preparation and serving.			
2. The egress path from the mobile food vendor must be clearly recognizable and clear of any tripping hazards.			
3. Doors serving as the exit discharge from the mobile food vendor must open completely with ease.			
4. Adequate path must be provided to the public right of way when exiting the mobile food vehicle.			
F. FIRE EXTINGUISHER			
1. When cooking operations are taking place a minimum 2A:10BC fire extinguisher is required.			
2. When cooking operations produce grease laden vapors, one 1.5-gallon Type "K" extinguisher is required.			
3. Deep frying: one 1.5-gallon Type "K" extinguisher is required for every 4 fryers with a oil capacity of 80 pounds.			
4. All fire extinguishers must be appropriately visible, accessible, distributed, mounted, and inspected.			
G. KITCHEN HOOD			
1. The hood exhaust must be clear of trees or any other obstructions additionally the fan must be running when cooking.			
2. Hood exhaust system must be clean, operational, & tagged by a qualified vendor (report maintained in the vehicle).			
3. Hood suppression inspected & tagged by a qualified vendor w/in the last 6 months (report maintained in vehicle).			
H. COOKING OIL			
1. Cooking oil storage containers within mobile food preparation vehicles shall have a maximum aggregate volume not more than 120 gallons (454L) and shall be stored in such a way as to not be toppled or damaged during transport.			
I. GENERAL			
1. Ensure the cooking surface is clean/free of combustible materials.			
2. Storage, stock, etc. is orderly and not excessive in nature ensuring that items do not become a safety concern.			
3. Current business license, operational permit, and DHEC permit posted in public view.			

Please visit at www.charleston-sc.gov/mobilefoodvendor for additional information and resources.