

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – MOBILE FOOD UNIT

We've compiled some of the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) that City staff receives from customers about mobile food units when doing business in Chandler.

Mobile Food Unit FAQs

What is a Mobile Food Unit?

A vehicle, enclosed trailer, cart or pushcart from which food is vended, sold or given away. The Mobile Food Unit must be designed to be readily movable.

What is a Mobile Conveyance Unit?

A type of Mobile Food Unit which moves quickly and readily from place to place, stopping only to complete a point of sale transaction. This definition shall include, but not be limited to, ice cream trucks or other food service trucks moving in a route type fashion, stopping for no longer than fifteen (15) minutes per stop.

What is the benefit of obtaining a Mobile Food Unit permit from the City of Chandler?

It allows you to operate within a Special Event (on City owned property), at a Corporate Plaza, School, Church, or Temporary Sales and Promotional Events (TSPE) (on private property) in the City of Chandler. Also, procuring a Mobile Food Unit Permit may reduce any potential delays for acceptance to future Special Events to which you are invited.

How long does it take to obtain a Mobile Food Unit Permit?

It takes approximately 15 business days once all requirements have been completed, turned in, and reviewed.

What is a Responsible Party, and why does each Mobile Food Unit need one?

A Responsible Party oversees the operations of the Mobile Food Unit and all employees, ensures all provisions of the Mobile Food Unit Code are adhered to, and must be present with the Mobile Food Unit at all times while operating.

Can I have more than one Responsible Party?

Yes. In many cases you will have more than one and are encouraged to include on the 'Responsible Party List', anyone that has, or will have responsibility for the unit while in operation.

Do I need to complete all the Mobile Food Unit permit requirements before turning in the forms?

Yes, we need all requirements completed, including the fire inspection (if needed) and a picture of the Mobile Food Unit, prior to receiving the forms to start the process.

What if I only have a hot dog cart? Do I still need a Fire inspection?

Maybe, it depends on the information and photograph provided. A Mobile Food Unit that is a cart may not require a Fire inspection, and we can help you determine if an inspection is needed.

How much will a Mobile Food Unit permit cost?

There is a \$100 annual permit fee (prorated based on the time of the year we receive the application) for the Mobile Food Unit permit and a \$10 fee for each Responsible Party.

Will there be other licenses needed to operate?

You will need to apply for a tax license with the City of Chandler and State of Arizona, and may also need additional County licensing for food preparation and service.

If I already have a Tax license, do I need anything else before I can sell food from a Mobile Food Unit outside a special event?

A Mobile Food Unit permit is required along with the Tax License and must be approved prior to operating.

Why do I need a Tax License as well as the Mobile Food Unit permit?

Mobile Food Unit permits and Tax licenses are regulated under two separate ordinances within the Chandler City Code, and serve different purposes. The Tax License allows you to file and remit your Sales Tax collected from the sale of food, to the City of Chandler as required by Chapter 62 and the Mobile Food Unit permit allows you to conduct business as a Mobile Food Unit in the City as required by Chapter 21.

Do I need a Mobile Food Unit Permit if I am only participating in a Special Event such as the Ostrich Festival, Chandler Car Show or Great American BBQ & Beer Festival?

If you are ONLY participating in a Special Event, listed on the event vendor list, and approved through the Special Event Committee, you are not required to obtain a Mobile Food Unit permit. However, you will still need a Tax License. If you are invited to participate in private events (TSPE) or would like to conduct business in the City of Chandler outside of a City approved Special Event, you will need to obtain the Mobile Food Unit permit.

What is the difference between a Special Event and a Temporary Sales and Promotional Event (TSPE)?

A **Special Event** is on City owned property. The Special Event Permit is obtained by the event promoter or organizer through the City's Special Event Committee; participation does not require a Mobile Food Unit permit. The Ostrich Festival, Great American BBQ & Beer Festival, and the Tumbleweed Tree Lighting and Parade of Lights are all examples of a Special Event. A **Temporary Sales and Promotional Event (TSPE)** is an event on private property where the owner of the property obtains a permit through the City's Code Enforcement Division. Car dealership promotions, store grand openings, and sidewalk sales are all examples of a TSPE, and a Mobile Food Unit permit is required to participate in these events.

I own a Mobile Food Unit, but all of my sales are catering. Am I treated differently if I am doing catering activities?

Yes, catering does not fall under the Mobile Food Unit Code. If there is not an exchange of money taking place between individual patrons and the Mobile Food Unit, then the activity does not require a Mobile Food Unit permit. Please contact us for further clarification.

Can I operate in a retail plaza for a fundraiser, anniversary sale, grand opening, or promotional event?

It depends. If the owner of the property has obtained a TSPE Permit through the City's Code Enforcement Division for the event, and you are on the approved event vendor list, you may operate during the TSPE. Keep in mind that an invitation to an event does not mean the event has gone through the permitting process, so please ask for a copy of the owner's TSPE permit for verification.

Note: A TSPE event in a retail plaza utilizing more than two Mobile Food Units will require obtaining permission from adjacent businesses and property owners. You may ONLY operate during the specified event dates, and must have an active Mobile Food Unit permit. Contact Code Enforcement at 480-782-4320 for more information.

Can a Mobile Food Unit operate in downtown Chandler?

The designated Entertainment District in downtown Chandler is not an allowable location for regular operation. However, if operation is through a Special Event or the owner of the property has obtained a TSPE Permit and the Mobile Food Unit is on the approved event vendor lists, then it is allowable.

I am a business owner in a retail plaza and want to have a Grand Opening event, how much would a Temporary Sales and Promotional Event Permit cost?

There is no charge for a TSPE Permit. However, you will need to get your application in no later than fifteen days prior to the event.

I am a business in a corporate style plaza or campus, what do I need to do to invite Mobile Food Units to serve food at my location?

If you invite a Mobile Food Unit to serve food to your employees at your corporate plaza or campus, all you need to do is verify the business has a Mobile Food Unit permit with the City of Chandler.

What's the difference between a corporate plaza/campus and a retail plaza?

A **corporate plaza/campus** is a cluster, complex, or campus style business location that is primarily designated for non-retail use. Customers typically do not visit this type of location. A **retail plaza** is a building or series of buildings providing retail and/or restaurant shopping options.

Can my Church or School invite Mobile Food Units to serve our patrons?

Yes, as long as the Mobile Food Unit is there as an amenity to the activity or function, has a Mobile Food Unit permit, and is not advertising as open to the public. For example, if you are inviting a Mobile Food Unit to serve patrons on Sunday after service, just verify the Mobile Food Unit has a valid permit, and no additional action is required. But, if you are having a large carnival or event at the Church, which is advertised as open to the public, then additional permitting may be required. Please contact our office to discuss the specifics.

Can I operate in City parks?

You must contact the Parks Division for permission to operate in and around City parks. Operating freely in and around the City Parks without written permission from the City is not allowed.

Does Chandler allow route-style vending for lunch or ice cream style trucks?

Yes. A Mobile Food Unit permit allows the applicant to designate their vehicular Mobile Food Unit (no carts) as a Mobile Conveyance Unit. The unit must move quickly and readily (no more than 15 minutes per stop), stopping only long enough to make a transaction, and then move on.

Does Chandler allow large food truck events?

Food truck events may be permissible if permitted under Chapter 32, Special Events. If you are interested in an event like this, more information can be found at www.chandleraz.gov/seapp. You can also contact a Special Event Coordinator at 480-782-2665 for additional information.

What should I do if I think a Mobile Food Unit is at a location that it shouldn't be?

Any questions or concerns can be addressed by calling us at 480-782-2280 or electronically reporting an unlicensed business through the link on our home page under Revenue Collections.

Additional Questions:

Mobile Food Unit Permit and Location Questions: Contact the Tax and License Division at 480-782-2280.

Special Event Process Questions: Contact the City's Special Event Coordinator at 480-782-2665.

Temporary Sales and Promotional Event Process Questions: Contact the Code Enforcement Division at 480-782-4320.