



County of San Diego

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & QUALITY - FOOD AND HOUSING DIVISION
5500 Overland Ave. San Diego, CA 92123 | (858) 505-6900



HOW TO START A MOBILE PUSH CART BUSINESS

All food vendors must obtain approval from the Department of Environmental Health and Quality, Food and Housing Division (DEHQ-FHD) before selling food. The steps listed below are to help you prepare and submit the required information to obtain approval and the necessary health permit to sell food and/or beverages.

A mobile food pushcart is a type of mobile food facility on wheels that typically sells packaged food (ice cream, whole fruit, tamales), or sells from a limited selection of open food items (hot dogs, shaved ice, coffee, churros, etc.). Whether buying or building a new cart, please be sure to obtain all approvals from this department prior to the purchase or construction of the cart.

1 What is my cart type?

Decide what type of cart you will be operating. Food can be sold as packaged or open. Packaged food is wrapped by a manufacturer or approved food facility and stays packaged on the cart until sold. Open food is made or prepared on the cart prior to serving to customers but is limited on what types of food can be made.

- Prepackaged Push Cart (ice cream, tamales, whole fruit, etc.)
- Unpackaged Mobile Cart (hot dogs, shaved ice, churros, coffee, etc.) - *State restrictions apply

2 Where will I store my cart?

Identify a commissary before you apply. State law requires all mobile food facilities, including carts, to be stored in a commissary when not in use. You will need to submit a signed commissary agreement form before a health permit will be issued.

**Note: Food, equipment, and carts may not be stored at a private residence.*

- Traditional:** Permitted by DEHQ to provide storage and cleaning facilities specifically for mobile food facilities.
- Non-Traditional:** Any other permitted food facility that can also provide storage and cleaning facilities to support a mobile food facility. Examples include markets, restaurants, coffee shops, etc.

3 Where do I want to sell?

Obtain a Business/Vendor License or Seller's/Solicitor's Permit. Along with a DEHQ Health Permit, you will need a Business/Vendor License or Sellers/Solicitor's Permit from any city you intend to sell in. Contact your local City Code Enforcement or Zoning Department for permitting requirements and to determine what areas are available for mobile vending.

**Scan the QR code below for a contact list for local City Code Enforcement Offices and/or Zoning Departments.*

4 How do I get my cart approved?

Submit Plan Check Documents and Pay Applicable Fees. Before you can get a health permit for your cart, the cart design must be reviewed and approved by DEHQ to operate.

**Scan the QR code below for documents to help you with your cart's plan check submission.*

The following items will need to be submitted:

- Plan or DEHQ Plan Template
- Signed Commissary Agreement Letter
- MFF Operational Procedures
- Menu

- *If you would like to design your own plans, please submit 2 sets of paper plans or 1 set of digital plans for review.*
- *If you would like to use the available DEHQ template, scan the QR code for more information.*
- *If you are looking to purchase a cart previously permitted in San Diego County, plan submittal may not be required. Please contact our department for the next steps to obtain approval.*

5 What do I need to submit for a Health Permit?

Submit Health Permit Application and Pay Applicable Fees. Once you have received approval from Plan Check, you will be directed to submit the following documents and pay all applicable fees. After your application has been reviewed and processed by DEHQ, your San Diego County Health Permit for Mobile Food Vending will then be issued.

- Health Permit Application
- City Business License or Seller's Permit (Step 3)
- Valid Photo ID

Plan Submittal Questions: Plan Check Specialist on Duty: 858-505-6659 | plnchk@sdcounty.ca.gov
Health Permit Questions: Specialist on Duty: 858-505-6900 | fhduyeh@sdcounty.ca.gov

Scan the QR code to access the DEHQ website and the forms referenced above.

