

fish processing plants

Guideline for the Construction and Operation of Mobile Fish Vending Units

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GUIDELINE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF MOBILE FISH VENDING UNITS

INTRODUCTION

There are a variety of foodborne agents associated with fish that are known to cause illnesses in humans. These potential agents include nematodes, various bacteria and viruses, marine toxins and toxic decomposition products. It is also known that most fish-borne illnesses have resulted from poor fish handling practices such as improper temperatures and a failure to protect fish from contamination.

The *Health Act* (R.S.B.C. 1996 Chapter 179) and the *Fish Inspection Act* (R.S.B.C. 1996 Chapter 148) mandates the inspection of all places where fish is intended for processing and sale for human consumption.

DEFINITIONS

Approved Sources for fish include the following:

- a food wholesaler that is established and approved as a food facility,
- a licensed fish processing facility, and
- a licensed fishing vessel selling its own catch. Eviscerating or dressing of fish by fishermen is permitted on a fishing vessel when at sea.

Base of Operation - means the location where the mobile fish vending unit is stored, cleaned, maintained and supplied before and after daily use.

Dressed Fish - means gutted only with the head and tail on.

Fish - means any fish, including shellfish and crustaceans, and marine animals and any parts, products or by-products thereof.

Mobile Fish Vending Vehicle - means any motorized or non-motorized conveyance or portable food service unit upon which fish are sold or offered for sale at retail establishments except licensed fishing boats selling their own catch directly from the vessel.

Processing - includes cleaning, filleting, icing, packing, canning, freezing, smoking, salting, cooking, pickling, drying or preparing fish for market in any other manner.

I. APPROVAL

A. Submission of Plans

Plans and specifications for a mobile fish vending unit should be submitted for approval to the local EHO in each Health Authority in the jurisdiction where the operator intends to operate the mobile fish vending unit.

B. Applications

Applications for a mobile fish vending unit should be in writing and include the following information:

- a) operator/company's legal name, address, telephone number and any other relevant information,
- b) design and construction details for the mobile fish vending unit,
- c) the types of fish to be sold, and the preparation involved in each,
- d) the area(s) in which the operator intends to operate the mobile fish vending unit,
- e) the source of potable water,
- f) the source of power,
- g) details of the base of operation (see Section IV),
- h) site for disposal of wastes, and
- i) licence plate number of vehicle (if used).

In addition to the above, all operators should be advised that the health approval does not imply compliance with other by-laws/regulations, and it is the applicants' responsibility to obtain all necessary approvals.

II. CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION REQUIREMENTS

A. Size and Types of Food

Mobile fish vending units should be of sufficient size to provide adequate protection, and prevent cross-contamination of fish products.

B. Materials

Mobile fish vending units should be constructed of durable material, and smooth impervious surfaces that can be easily cleaned and sanitized.

C. Design

Mobile fish vending units should be designed as a single, self-contained unit, able to operate without the use of detached tables and counters, or require additional refrigeration facilities at place of operation.

D. Refrigeration Equipment

Mechanical refrigeration should be provided for the storage of fish products which is:

- a) sufficient in capacity, and
- b) capable of maintaining fish products at 4°C (40°F) or less, and in the case of frozen pre-packaged fish products at -18°C (0°F) or less.

Note: Exemption - dressed fish in approved insulated containers/chests may be exempted from mechanical refrigeration, with ice substituted as the means of refrigeration.

E. Thermometers

Thermometers are an important component. All compartments that hold fish products require commercially approved thermometers located for convenient monitoring. Temperatures should be read, recorded, and dated at least twice each day, and a record of such temperatures should be maintained for review by the EHO.

F. Sinks

Mobile fish vending units should be equipped with a two (2) compartment stainless steel sink with potable hot and cold running water. Each compartment should be large enough to immerse the largest piece of equipment/utensil to facilitate washing and sanitizing.

A separate handwash sink should be provided and equipped with potable hot and cold running water, soap in a dispenser and single use hand towels.

Note: Exemption – when the nature of a premises' operation requires only minimal use of utensils/equipment in the preparation and handling of fish products (i.e., dispensing tongs), the requirement of a separate handwash sink may be waived, and one of the two (2) compartment sinks may be designated for this purpose.

G. Water Under Pressure

The following water requirements should be provided:

- a) an approved water source should be specified,
- b) hot and cold water should be supplied on a continuous flow basis. Hence, water under pressure, including gravity flow is required. Hand pumps are not acceptable for this purpose,
- c) hot water should be supplied at a minimum temperature of 43°C (110°F), and
- d) piping and fixtures should be designed for potable water (e.g., food grade).

H. Holding Tanks

The water and wastewater holding tanks should comply with the provisions below:

- a) the potable water tanks should only be used for storing potable water,
- b) the potable water tanks should be sufficiently sized (e.g., 36 litres/8 imperial gallons minimum) to ensure an adequate supply of water for handwashing, cleaning of equipment, and similar operations,
- c) the waste water holding tanks should be sized to accommodate at least 125% (45 litres/10 imperial gallons minimum) of the volume of the potable water supply,
- d) an approved site for disposal of the waste water should be specified, and
- e) the potable water tank should be designed to facilitate cleaning and sanitizing as well as sanitary filling and emptying. Generally, design criteria should include the following:
 - I. the tank is sloped to an outlet that allows for complete drainage,
 - II. the tank is enclosed from the filling inlet to the discharge outlet,

- III. if the tank has an access port, the port cover should be provided with a gasket and device for securing the cover in place. As well, the cover should be flanged to overlap the opening and sloped to drain,
- IV. if the tank has a vent, it should terminate in a downward direction and be covered with a screen or filter,
- V. the tank inlet should be positioned so that it is protected from outside contaminants,
- VI. when compressed air is used to pressurize the potable water tank, a filter that does not pass oil or oil vapours should be installed in the air supply line between the compressor and the potable water system, and
- VII. if a hose is used on the tank outlet, the hose should be cleanable and should not be used for any other purpose.

I. Protection of Food from Contamination

Fish products should be protected from contamination at all times. As such, fish products should not be allowed to be exposed to the elements. This may involve the use of umbrellas, canopies, and equipment coverings/lids, depending on the design of the unit.

J. Waste Disposal

A covered garbage receptacle of sufficient size should be provided. The garbage should be removed daily or as often as required and the receptacle should be cleaned (soap and water) and sanitized (e.g., bleach) after each garbage removal. Spill foods should be cleaned up promptly to help prevent the attraction of pests.

III. Operational Requirements

1. With the exception of dressed fish, all fish products should be packaged and labelled. Processing of fish within the mobile vehicle is not acceptable, and should only occur at a licenced provincial or federally registered fish processing facility,
2. Sales of bivalves are a particular health concern and the operator must have a written record (invoice or tags), which verifies that the bivalves were processed at a federally registered processing facility,

Note: Prior to their sale, all bivalves must first be processed at a federally registered processing facility.

3. As per the requirements of the *Fish Inspection Act* with the exception of fishermen gutting their own fish on licensed fishing vessels while at sea, all processing of fish should be done at a provincially licenced or federally registered fish processing facility,
4. Fish products should be maintained at 4°C (40°F) or less, and in the case of frozen at -18°C (0°F) or less,
5. All work surfaces should be kept clean and sanitized throughout the day,

6. Mobile fish vending units should be returned to the base of operation at the end of each day for cleaning and sanitizing,

Note: Exemption – if the operator is selling only pre-packaged frozen fish products from an approved source, then they do not have to return to the base of operation, as long as the mobile fish vending unit is kept in a clean and sanitary condition and the temperature of the frozen fish products is kept at -18°C (0°F) or less at all times.

7. All fish products should be from an approved source and fish slips/tags should be kept on-site for review by the EHO, Fisheries Inspector, Conservation Officer, Federal Inspector and/or Fishery Officer, and,
8. Pre-packaged fish products intended for immediate consumption should be labeled in accordance with Canadian Food Inspection Agency requirements. This includes but is not limited to:
 - a) common food product name,
 - b) volume/weight of the food product,
 - c) date of preparation,
 - d) “best before”/expiry date,
 - e) list of ingredients,
 - f) producer name, address and telephone number, and
 - g) any other relevant information.

IV. Base of Operation

The operator should have a base of operation for the mobile fish vending unit and it should include the following:

- a) approved base of operation by the local EHO,
- b) secured and stored to protect it against the elements,
- c) be equipped with cleaning facilities for the mobile fish vending unit which consists of two (2) compartment sink with hot and cold running water,
- d) be equipped with refrigeration facilities adequate to the needs of the operation, and
- e) fish preparation, processing or packaging at the base of operation can only occur at provincially licenced or federally registered fish processing facilities.

V. Food Safety Training

Operators of mobile fish vending unit and food handlers operating the unit during their absence should possess the FOODSAFE Level I certificate, or its equivalent.

VI. Food Safety and Sanitation Plans

Operators of mobile fish vending units should submit to the local EHO a food safety and sanitation plan.

VII. Personal Hygiene

All operators and food handlers should;

- a) observe good personal hygiene,
- b) wear clean outer garments,
- c) keep hair controlled,
- d) refrain from smoking while handling food, and
- e) wash hands frequently.