

TRANSIENT MERCHANT & MOBILE FOOD VENDOR PERMIT FACTS AND INFORMATION

Everyone who wishes to sell food, beverages, or merchandise in Des Moines from a vehicle, trailer, pushcart, or temporary structure (non-food items only) must have a *transient merchant license*. Transient merchants may only be located on private properties which have a current *premise permit*. They cannot be in residential areas.

Mobile vendors can locate on properties with a current premise permit but may also use a meter hood to park at meters on designated downtown streets. They may sell food and beverages for immediate consumption only. There are additional fees associated with the meter hoods.

WHEN IS A LICENSE NOT REQUIRED?

A license is not required for the following activities, but you must still follow the restrictions outlined in Section 78-74 of the Des Moines [Municipal Code](#). You may contact Zoning (515-283-4207) for setup information, and you must obtain property owner permission.

- Yard sales (twice a year)
- Selling unprocessed raw fruits or vegetables
- Selling natural Christmas trees during November and December
- Selling by a 501(c)(3) organization for a limited time, not more than three consecutive days in any seven-day period.
- Sales conducted on property zoned for retail sales use owned by a non-profit corporation. These sales must be sponsored by the non-profit and are limited to weekends June-August.
- If you are part of a group with a street closure permit for a special event
 - Contact your event coordinator for requirements.
- Sale of food located within Cowles Commons.

HOW DO I GET A TRANSIENT MERCHANT OR MOBILE VENDOR LICENSE?

Applications are available from the City Clerk's Office in person or [online](#). Applications will only be accepted with all the required documents and fees. Licenses are not transferrable. Checklists of required items are included with the application.

You must apply at least three business days in advance of the license being issued. All past due City fines or charges must be paid (parking tickets, false alarms, etc.)

HOW DO I GET A PREMISE PERMIT?

Premise permit applications are available from the City Clerk's Office in person or [online](#) and must be completed by the property owner. Contact the Zoning Department (283-4207) for assistance with getting a map, or with questions regarding locations.

- Annual licenses are \$100.
- A map showing the location of the vendor setup must be submitted with the application.
- Premise permits will only be issued in commercial and industrial zones – no residential areas.

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WHAT ARE THE FEES?

Transient Merchant:

- Annual license - \$570
- 30-day license - \$220 (consecutive days)
- 3-day license - \$150 (consecutive days)
- Fire Inspection - \$100 (subsequent inspections on the same vehicle are at no charge)
- Cash Bond - \$200 (refundable on request, 120 days after expiration of license)

Mobile Vendor:

- Annual license - \$570
- Fire Inspection - \$100 (subsequent inspections on the same vehicle are at no charge)
- Cash Bond - \$200 (refundable on request, 120 days after expiration of license)
- Meter Hood - \$1,180
- Meter Hood Deposit - \$35

Premise Permit: \$100

The cash bond can be paid by check, cash, or credit card. The bond is a one-time fee and can be refunded on request four months after sales stop if no claim has been made on the bond.

I WANT TO:

- Park on the street
 - At meters in the four downtown mobile vendor zones - you will need a Mobile Vendor License. Contact the City Clerk's Office for information and maps of these zones.
 - Areas other than the downtown zones – parking on the street is prohibited. Contact the City Clerk's Office about acquiring a Premise Permit if there is a non-residential property you would like to sell from.
- Participate in a special event
 - If the street is closed for the event, contact the event coordinator. You will not need a transient merchant license if not required by the event, and there is a street closure permit for the event.
 - If the street is not closed, you may only park at a location which has a current premise permit, if you have a Transient Merchant license.
 - If the street is not closed but there are streets designated for mobile vendor parking nearby, ask about acquiring a Mobile Vendor license to park nearby.
- Park on a certain property
 - The property will need a current premise permit. Premise permits are not issued for residential properties.
- Sell from a sidewalk, alley, or driveway
 - Selling from these areas is prohibited

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- Sell in a park
 - Certain parks allow mobile food vendors or transient merchants with a current license – contact the Park and Recreation Department at 515-237-1386 or apply for a 1-day or Annual permit [online](#) through the Parks and Recreation catalog. The permits are under the Facility Rentals section.
- Cater for a wedding, birthday, etc.
 - The vehicle must either be parked on a property with a current premise permit, or be a mobile vendor parked on a designated downtown street.
- Sell food from a table, grill, or barbeque
 - Food cannot be served from tables, grills, or barbeques. The state does not issue a Mobile Food Unit license for these activities.

WHAT ARE THE RULES?

- The license and sales tax permit must be displayed so it is visible to the public during hours of operation.
- All equipment, temporary structures, garbage, trailers, and vehicles must be removed from the premises when the business is not open and during prohibited hours.
- You can have one sign, not more than 24 square feet in area, that is securely anchored. It must be located outside the required front yard setback area.
- You may only operate on a premise with a current premise permit, and only one transient merchant license holder may operate on premises at a time.
- Refer to the Acknowledgement Form on the application or the City ordinance for additional rules and regulations. You may contact the City Clerk's Office for information or questions.

WHAT ACTIVITIES DOES THE LICENSE NOT COVER?

Selling from a sidewalk, street, alley, driveway access, or public way is prohibited – for instance, you cannot use a pushcart or bicycle to sell from these areas, you must be located on a licensed premise.

Transient merchants or mobile vendors may not operate in a residential area.

If selling food, you must have a Mobile Food Unit License issued by the state. Food cannot be served from tables, grills, or barbeques. The state does not issue a Mobile Food Unit license for these activities.

WHO DO I NEED TO CONTACT?

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

515-283-4209

https://www.dsm.city/departments/city_clerk/business_licenses_and_permits.php
cityclerk@dmgov.org

400 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines, IA 50309

Hours: 8am-5pm Mon-Fri

- Applications & general questions

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ZONING DIVISION

515-283-4207

https://www.dsm.city/departments/neighborhood_services/zoning_enforcement.php
dz@dmgov.org

602 Robert D. Ray Drive

Hours: 8am-4:30pm Mon-Fri

- Assistance with site plans
- Reviewing site plans
- Enforcement of violations

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

515-281-3114

<https://tax.iowa.gov/>

Hoover State Office Building, 4th Floor

1305 E. Walnut Street

Hours: 8am-4:30pm Mon-Fri

- Retail Sales Tax Permits

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS, APPEALS, AND LICENSING - FOOD SAFETY BUREAU

515-725-5342

<https://dial.iowa.gov/i-need/licenses/food-hotels/apply-food-license>

6200 Park Avenue, Ste 100, Des Moines, IA 50321

Hours: 8:30am - 4:30pm Mon-Fri

- Mobile Food Unit Licenses
- Food Service Establishment Licenses
- Home Food Processing Establishments

DES MOINES FIRE DEPARTMENT

515-283-4240

firedept@dmgov.org

2715 Dean Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50317

- Fire inspections
 - 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month from 8am-11am.
 - First come, first served
 - Park on the EAST side of the building near the American flag, along E 28th Street or in parking area.

For information on where to acquire Certified Food Protection Manager certifications, please see the information sheet included with the application packet.