

SUGESTIONS ON **HOW TO START AN ICE CREAM TRUCK VENDING OPERATION**

Ice Cream Trucks – Making them Work for You!

The Benefits of Trucks

Ice cream trucks are an excellent way to become an entrepreneur. You make your own hours and work schedule. You can work close to home. There are many locations in and around your community which are appropriate for ice cream trucks – neighborhood streets, construction sites, parks, beaches, shopping malls, county & state fairs, playgrounds, and special events.

Identifying Your Needs

To determine what you need before purchasing an ice cream truck or a fleet of trucks or van's for your business, consider the following questions:

- Will you be selling novelties, soft serve and or shaved ice?
- Where will you be selling?
- Where will your depot be? [the storage place for your truck & ice cream]
- Who will you purchase your ice cream, sodas and candy from?
- What commercial automobile or liability insurance do you need for you and your community?
- What are the local health department requirements?
- Who will operate the trucks(s)?
- Do you need any permits or licenses?

What to Sell: Novelties vs. Soft serve

Determining whether you will be serving novelties or soft serve is the best place to start, as this will help you to determine the equipment you will need. Soft serve requires 3-4 times the equipment than novelties trucks.

Novelties:

- Simpler than soft serve, since orders are pre-packaged
- Few, if any, health department concerns
- Easy to inventory
- Far less equipment to buy and maintain

Soft serve:

- Requires a machine to dispense ice cream
- Need to refill machine
- Must have a generator or an inverter

- Takes longer to cleanup at night
- Harder to inventory
- Offers opportunity to sell different sizes – small, medium and large
- Opportunity to be creative with products
- Health department requirements
- More profitable than novelties
- Cost of the truck can be 3-4 times more expensive than a novelty truck
- Higher average dollar sales
- Soft serve truck can sell both soft serve ice cream and novelties

The following is a basic list of items you will need, and some suggestions on where to find them, to get started in ice cream vending.

Complying with Local Laws

Before selling, be sure that you have all necessary permits and/or licenses to sell. Contact the local health department and municipal offices where you will be located to get all of the details for compliance. The requirement for permits will vary depending on your particular locality. For business or health permits, contact the city or county office where you plan to vend. For a Peddler's permit, contact the police department where you plan to vend.

Purchase Proper Insurance Coverage

Each municipality has different requirements for commercial auto and general liability insurance. Make sure you have the correct coverage.

Vehicle

You will need an approximately 14-16 foot long vehicle. Some examples are the Chevy Step Van or High Top Van. Possible sources for a vehicle of this type include Post Office surplus, used truck and van dealers and newspaper classifieds (van and truck section). Remember when buying a used truck that you generally get what you pay for. Aluminum bodies are preferred because they are lighter, aiding fuel efficiency and do not rust. Also check out other businesses which may use similar vehicles, such as bread delivery vehicles.

Refrigeration Options

Ideally the ice cream machine should be bolted to the frame of the truck. There are complicated electrical and refrigeration requirements involved and it may be wise to use a professional refrigeration mechanic.

If selling novelties in addition to soft serve, mounting a freezer on the back wall saves space. Generator and Electrical End must have enough capacity to carry the full load. Check with the manufacturer for specifications.

Maintaining proper ventilation for the generator and compressors is a key to operational efficiency.

There are two options to consider:

Commercial chest freezers are approximately 5-8 foot long.

Non-Commercial freezer should be four foot long maximum. If more than four feet of freezer is required, then use 2 three foot or 2 four foot freezers or any other combination that meets your needs.

Important: Freezers must be secured to the vending vehicle floor to prevent them from moving during sudden stops.

[To purchase a freezer, look for IAICV freezer suppliers in the IAICV Membership Directory.]

I think in all fairness we should leave this out or we should include all the truck manufactures [icecreamtrucks.com is planning on buying a full page add in the new directory] This is your call..

Refrigeration Devices and Materials

Generator - to keep the freezer running while vending. Check out hardware stores, specialty van and truck dealers or auto parts stores.

Invertors - convert 12 volt battery power to 110-volt power, so you can provide power to the freezer from the vehicle battery. Again, check out hardware stores, specialty van and truck dealers and auto parts stores.

Dry ice - while popular with some vendors, this option can be costly, time consuming, dangerous and hard to maintain at an even temperature. Possible sources for dry ice include ice cream depots and ice companies.

Cold plate freezer's - are a good solution. Cold plates are fixed into the walls of the freezer and hold your product at a predetermined temperature. Cold plates are composed of a eutectic solution that freezes and holds temperature. Compressor-charged refrigerant lines run through the plates to uniformly freeze the solution. Then you can just unplug and go! A good cold plate freezer should last at least 12 hours in 100-degree temps. "Pull-down," the time it takes to re-freeze the cold plate, is an important aspect in the quality of a good freezer. A quality freezer has an approximate 6-8 hour pull down. Since holding power is of utmost importance for these freezers, a freezer constructed using polyurethane insulation is the quality choice.

To find out about cold plates contact your freezer manufacturer or check the directory

Sound

Music Box - a device which alerts potential customers that you are in the neighborhood. Important: Please turn off your music box when you stop to vend in residential areas. Look for IAICV music box suppliers in the IAICV Membership Directory. Another possible source for music boxes is at your local ice cream depot.

Speaker - to be hooked up to music box for sound amplification. Important: Please observe any local ordinances regarding sound decibel limits. Possible sources for speakers include electronic stores.

Safety Equipment

Safety video, posters, manuals and decals – Visit the IAICV Website to see all the latest safety and training videos at www.iaicv.org.

Swing arm – these can be used only where permitted. Again, check out the IAICV Membership Directory or ask at your local ice cream depot.

Flashing yellow lights - to be installed atop of vending vehicle. Available at hardware stores or auto parts stores.

Back-up alarm - to warn pedestrians and/or other vehicles when backing up. Important: Do not back up after making a sell. Available at auto parts stores.

Vending Equipment

Shelving - to display candy and snack items. Check out hardware or home improvement stores for options.

Point of sale decals - to showcase your ice cream. Important: Attach decals on the right side (curbside) of vending vehicle only. Available at most ice cream distributors.

Get Started!

Now it is time to purchase your truck and sell, sell, sell! By taking the time to carefully examine the important factors listed here, you will be prepared to select and purchase a truck that meets your needs.

For More Information

For more information or to purchase a truck safety video, please visit the International Association of Ice Cream Vendors at www.iaicv.org.
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