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Food trucks temporarily allowed at ODOT rest areas

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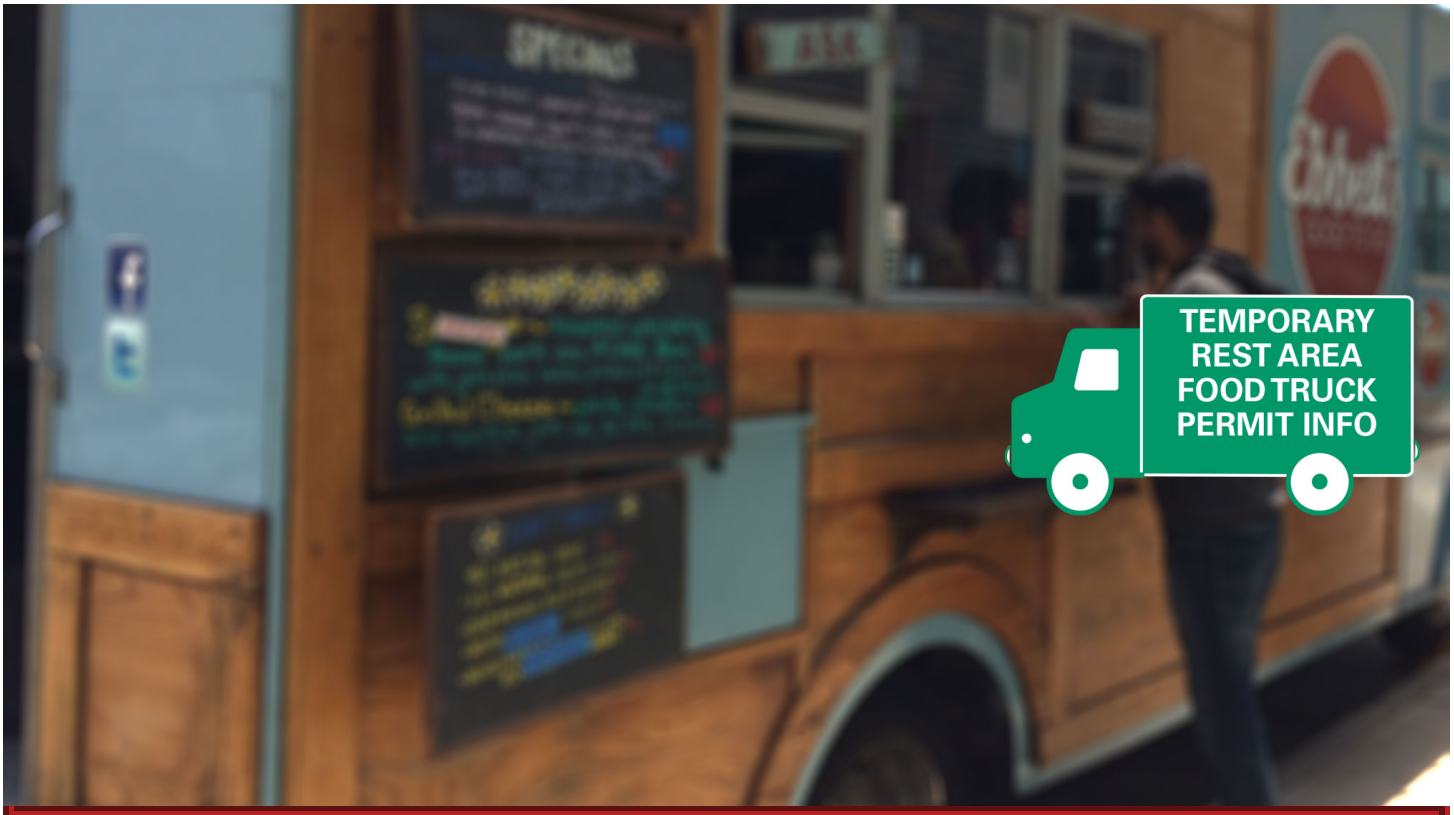

UPDATE: May 25 was the last day of this temporary allowance.

Due to the reopening of restaurant dining rooms throughout the state on May 26, please be advised the Temporary Rest Area Food Truck Permit program expired after the Memorial Day holiday weekend. Beginning May 26, mobile food vending operations will be prohibited at all interstate rest areas in Ohio in accordance with state law.

COLUMBUS - To address one of the biggest challenges truck drivers face, access to a hot meal, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is temporarily opening the state's 86 rest areas to food trucks.

"Truck drivers are the lifeblood of the economy and their jobs have never been more critical than now," said Governor Mike DeWine. "I've heard from many in the trucking industry that finding a place to eat while they're on the road has been tough, but we're here to help."

Federal regulations prohibit commercial activity at rest areas, with limited exceptions. Last week, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced they would temporarily suspend enforcement of those regulations.

"Truck drivers are delivering food and goods essential to our homes and medical supplies to healthcare providers. They should be able to have easy access to a hot meal," said ODOT Director Jack Marchbanks. "We thank FHWA for recognizing these are unique times."

Mobile food vendors must download a permit from the ODOT website and display it at all times while operating. They must also abide by state and local food service regulations as well as social distancing guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to ensure the safety and health of staff and customers. The Ohio State Highway Patrol will regularly monitor rest areas to enforce compliance with all Ohio laws and regulations by the commercial food truck vendors who elect to set up operations.

"Vending at Ohio's rest areas is provided by sightless and visually impaired merchants. They rely on the sale of beverages and snacks for their income. In order to ensure they are not directly competing with these vendors, mobile food trucks will not be permitted to sell prepackaged snacks or any drinks other than coffee," Marchbanks said.

It is important to note that this temporary permission for food truck vendors to set up in ODOT-administered rest areas is intended to help provide options for truck drivers, not to replace the goods and services offered by retail operations along Ohio's interstates.