



Policy Statement

Outside Storage of Packaged Ice (External Freezer Variance)

Policy

In accordance with Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) 16.60.230(D)(2), the Anchorage Health Department (AHD) may allow bagged/packaged ice in a dedicated external freezer only when the operator has submitted a variance request and AHD has approved the variance in writing.

This policy applies only to packaged/bagged ice used as a food ingredient and is intended to ensure ice remains protected from contamination, tampering, and improper use when stored outside the permitted unit.

Requirement to Submit Variance Request

Operators must submit the “Variance Request Form – Mobile Food Unit Outside Storage of Ice” and receive written approval from AHD before using any external freezer to store ice outside of the permitted structure Mobile Food Unit or other type of permitted food establishment.

Operating under this alternate method without an approved variance is not allowed.

Approved Alternate Method

If approved, the permit holder must follow all conditions below:

1. ICE ONLY

- The external freezer is restricted to ICE ONLY that will be used as a food ingredient (bagged/packaged ice).
- No other foods may be stored in the external freezer at any time.

2. Location and Oversight

- Freezer must be located in a position easily visible to food workers.
- Freezer must be located not more than 50 feet from the permitted food establishment to support oversight and deter tampering/misuse.

3. Protection from Contamination

- Freezers must be maintained clean, intact, and closed to protect ice from contamination from the environment (e.g., splash, dust, pests).

4. Security

- Freezer must remain locked and secure at all times except when ice is placed into or removed from the freezer.

5. Fees / Alternate Requests

- No variance review fee will be charged if the vendor agrees to follow the approved alternate methods described in the approved variance.
- A \$100 variance review fee may apply if the vendor requests alternative methods not included in the pre-established variance form.

Justification

This policy provides a controlled, department-approved pathway for food establishments that lack sufficient interior freezer capacity to maintain operations while ensuring ice (a food) is stored in a manner that prevents contamination, tampering, and misuse. By standardizing required controls (dedicated use, proximity/visibility, sanitation, and locking), AHD can allow limited outside storage without reducing public health protections.

Complications and Unknowns

- External freezers may be used to store Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods or other unauthorized food items, increasing the risk of improper storage or temperature abuse. The ICE ONLY restriction and proximity/visibility requirements are intended to prevent this misuse. Tampering risk: External placement increases risk of unauthorized access; the freezer must remain locked except during active use.
- Environmental exposure: Poorly maintained freezers may allow contamination from pests/dust/splash; cleanliness and freezer integrity must be maintained.

Documentation and Enforcement

- The approved variance (and any required supporting documentation or HACCP elements, if applicable) must be available upon request for inspection.
- Failure to follow the approved conditions may result in revocation of the variance approval and/or enforcement action consistent with applicable code.

References

- Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) 16.60.230(D)(2) – Mobile food units and kiosks (adequate storage within unit unless alternate method approved).
- Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health and Human Services – Variance Request Form: Mobile Food Unit Outside Storage of Ice (Program Manager revised 05-2026).
- Anchorage Health Department – Policy Statement: Exemption from Permitting Low-Risk Food Items (dated 05-07-2025) (used as formatting framework).
- [Variance Request Outside Freezer Ice Storage](#)