



# General Best Management Practices for Fats, Oils, and Grease

Residual fats, oils, and grease (FOG) are byproducts that food service establishments (FSE) must constantly manage. Typically, FOG enters a facility's plumbing system from ware washing, floor cleaning, and equipment sanitation. Sanitary sewer systems are neither designed nor equipped to handle the FOG that accumulates on the interior of the municipal sewer collection system pipes. A large percentage of Orange County's sanitary sewer overflows (sewer spills) are the result of pipe blockages from FOG accumulation from residential, institutional, and commercial sources. The best way to manage FOG is to keep the material out of the plumbing systems. The following are suggestions for proper FOG management.

## Wet Cleanup - The Status Quo

It is common practice in the food service industry to use a water hose as a broom, and wash everything on the floor to the drain as a method of disposal. This method not only forces FOG into the wastewater stream, but also results in foods, detergents, disinfectants, waxes, insecticides and other chemicals entering the sewer system. Even worse than this mixed wastewater entering the sewer system, it is sometimes hosed into the storm drain, where it goes directly into our waterways unfiltered and untreated - the same waterways we use for recreation, fishing, and to supply our drinking water. This practice is not only harmful to

the environment, but it may be illegal, resulting in fines or even jail.

## Dry Cleanup - The Better Way!

Rather than resort to the wet cleanup method of cleaning, OCSD recommends the dry cleanup method. The "first pass" in equipment and utensil cleaning should be made with scrapers, squeegees, or absorbents to prevent the bulk of food materials from going down the drain. Do not pour grease, fats, or oils from cooking down the drain and do not use sinks to dispose of food scraps. Likewise, it is important to educate kitchen staff not to remove drain screens as this may allow paper or plastic cups, straws, and other utensils to enter the plumbing system during cleanup. The success of dry cleanup is dependent upon the behavior of the employees and availability of the tools for removal of food before washing. To practice dry cleanup:

- Use rubber scrapers to remove FOG from cookware, utensils, chafing dishes, and serving ware.
- Use food grade paper to soak up oil and grease under fryer baskets.
- Use paper towels to wipe down work areas. Cloth towels will accumulate grease that will eventually end up in your drains from towel washing/rinsing.
- Use kitty litter to absorb liquid spills. Sweep and dispose of the liner in the trash, as long as the spilled material is not a hazardous material.

## Spill Prevention

Preventing spills reduces the amount of waste on food preparation and serving areas that will require clean up. A dry workplace is safer for employees in avoiding slips, trips, and falls. For spill prevention:

- Empty containers before they are full to avoid spills.
- Use a cover to transport interceptor contents to rendering barrels.
- Provide employees with the proper tools (ladles, ample containers, etc.) to transport materials without spilling.
- Keep a spill kit in food preparation areas.

## Maintenance

Maintenance is key to avoiding FOG blockages. For whatever method or technology is used to collect, filter and store FOG, ensure that equipment is regularly maintained. All staff should be aware of and trained to perform correct cleaning procedures, particularly for undersink interceptors that are prone to break down due to improper maintenance. A daily and weekly maintenance schedule is highly recommended.

- Contract with a management company to professionally clean large hood filters. Small hoods can be hand-cleaned with spray detergents and wiped down with cloths. Hood filters can be effectively cleaned by routinely spraying them with hot water with little or no detergent over the mop sink, which should be connected to a grease trap. After the hot water rinse (separately trapped), filter panels can go into the dishwasher. For hoods to operate properly in the removal of grease-laden vapors, the ventilation system will also need to be balanced with sufficient make-up air.
- Skim/filter fryer grease daily and change oil when necessary. Use a test kit provided by your grocery distributor rather than simply a “guess” to determine when to change oil. This extends the life of both the fryer and the oil. Build-up of carbon deposits on the bottom of the fryer acts as an insulator that forces the fryer to heat longer, thus causing the oil to break down sooner.
- Collect fryer oil in an oil-rendering tank for disposal or transport it to a bulk oil-rendering tank instead of discharging it into a grease interceptor or waste drain.

- Cleaning intervals depend upon the type of food establishment involved. Some facilities require monthly or once every two months cleaning. Establishments that operate a large number of fryers or handle a large amount of fried foods such as chicken, along with ethnic food establishments may need at least monthly cleanings.
- Develop a rotation system if multiple fryers are in use. Designate a single fryer for products that are particularly high in deposits, and change that one more often.

## Oil & Grease Collection/Recycling

FOG is a commodity which if handled properly can be treated as a valuable resource. See Fact Sheet on Restaurant Oil and Grease Rendering.

## Garbage Disposal

Businesses that use garbage disposals to dispose of food waste are simply transferring disposal from a landfill disposal to a wastewater treatment plant. Disposal of food waste via the sewer system is more costly than landfill disposal and acts as a disincentive to reduce generation of food waste or to separate food for donations, rendering, animal feed, or composting. Many business owners assume that water from their garbage disposal flows through their grease trap before discharge to the sewer system; however, in most cases, disposals are actually plumbed directly to black water systems, which bypass the grease trap.

## Consumer Tip

Buyers beware! When choosing a method of managing your oil and grease, ensure that it does what the vendor says it will do. Some technologies or “magic bugs” do not eliminate the problem but result in grease accumulations further down the sewer line. “Out of sight” is not out of mind.” Check the vendor’s references before investing in technological and biological management methods.