



Quick Bite

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Keep your kitchen safe

Richard Norman, MD of specialist ventilation ductwork cleaning firm Indepth Hygiene Services talks to QuickBite about the importance of keeping grease extract systems clean to help prevent a fire hazard



There has been a spate of kitchen fires in recent months in restaurants around the capital. The most high profile was at Jamie Oliver's Barbecoa restaurant which led to around 150 people being evacuated from a nearby shopping centre. Four fire engines and more than 20 fire-fighters tackled the blaze. Part of the ducting, in the first-floor restaurant's extraction system, had caught light.

There is on average one kitchen fire every day in the London area; in nine out of ten fires linked to catering facilities, uncleaned grease deposits in grease extract ducting have ignited to make fires more widespread and destructive.

But despite the compelling evidence that grease deposits in extract ventilation systems present serious fire hazards, Richard believes that the message simply isn't getting through. He says: "Grease extract systems are often not given the attention they demand because extract ducting from the kitchen canopy often runs hidden behind ceilings and walls.

"Until a fire occurs, there are often seldom other clear signs of danger. But I am

shocked at how many establishments still don't prioritise grease extract cleaning; the costs of not doing so in terms of business disruption, damage to reputation, danger to the public and staff not to mention the legal implications, can be substantial."

"Most property insurers require grease extracts to be cleaned every six months and annually at an absolute minimum"

Fire authorities believe that the grease extract ventilation system linked to catering facilities is the greatest risk to the safety of building occupants, and indeed grease deposits in extract ventilation systems must be removed for compliance with the Fire Safety Order.

Indepth Hygiene works closely with the fire authorities presenting to their inspecting officers on the issue of uncleaned grease extract systems. Norman says: "The Fire Safety Order requires that 'a person who has some level of control in the premises must take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire'.

"It is worth noting that should a fire occur in grease extract ductwork where there has been compliance failure and a fatality arises, the 'responsible person' could be facing criminal prosecution."

In addition to the requirements of the Fire Safety Order UK, property insurers such as Aviva, Zurich, Liverpool Victoria and AXA are now demanding kitchen grease extract ventilation ductwork be 'cleaned in its entirety' to comply with policy warranties.

"Most property insurers require grease extracts to be cleaned every six months and annually at an absolute minimum. However, we are seeing an increasing number of insurers requiring as many as four ductwork cleans per annum under their policies," says Norman.

"Businesses need to pay attention to fire risk management. If it's not done in-house, it's important to ensure the company it's out-sourced to is accredited by the Fire Protection Agency (FPA), Institute of Fire Engineers (IFE) or the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH). Failure to ensure this could lead to substantial financial implications if a fire was to occur."