



HVR

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Danger in grease extraction

Despite the evidence that grease deposits in extract ventilation systems present serious fire hazards, **Richard Norman** believes that the message simply isn't getting through

THERE IS on average one kitchen fire every day in the London area; in nine out of 10 fires linked to catering facilities, uncleaned grease deposits in grease extract ducting have ignited to make fires more widespread and destructive.

Norman 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 it's shocking 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."

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 with the fire authorities presenting to 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," says Norman.

Indepth Hygiene is often asked to provide expert witness services in court cases dealing with disputed cases involving fires in grease extract system; the company also provides advice prior to any litigation.

Norman says: "If fire risk management is not done in-house, it is important to ensure the company it is outsourced to is accredited by the Fire Protection Agency, Institute of Fire Engineers or the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health.

//The author is the MD of ventilation ductwork cleaning firm Indepth Hygiene Services//