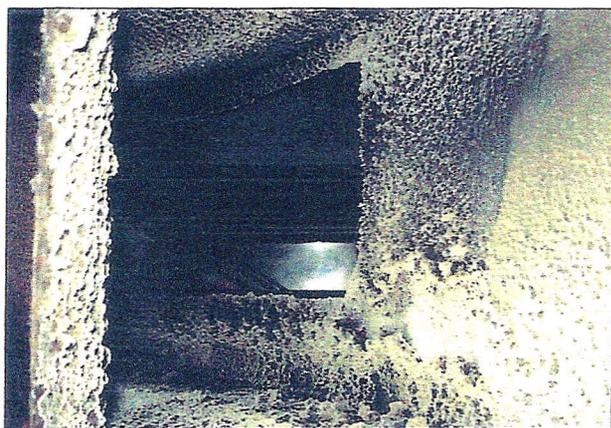


Catering and the Fire Safety Order

Most Bursars will be familiar with the visit from the Environmental Health Officer. But the EHO's brief is essentially concerned with practices and procedures relating to the storage, preparation and cooking of food. There is, however, one important aspect of running a school's catering facility which does not fall within the EHO's remit yet requires priority management attention. It is the fire risk to be found in most extract ventilation systems linked to catering facilities which are designed to take grease laden air from the cooking operation to exhaust to atmosphere. As the air cools so grease particles settle on the internal surfaces of the extract ducting requiring only a spark or flash to ignite and create a fire which will be a threat to the safety of all.



Internal ducting surfaces of grease extract system showing uncleaned potentially flammable grease deposits

At a recent seminar, a spokesman for the Fire and Rescue Services stated - "Uncleaned grease extract systems present probably the greatest potential fire risk in buildings with catering facilities".

The Fire Safety Order, which was introduced in 2006, has real teeth. For example, the 'responsible person' (and in terms of the legislation this would almost inevitably be the Bursar) can be prosecuted for failing to fulfil his responsibilities to protect building occupants and, in the event of death or injury resulting

from a fire, be subject to criminal prosecution. There is also the question of property insurance warranties to be fulfilled. More and more property insurances now spell out the frequency with which grease extract systems should be cleaned, and most commonly demand cleaning every six months.

Incidentally, even when the catering service has been contracted out the responsibility for meeting the requirements of the Fire Safety Order remain with the school and cannot be passed over to the caterer.

Your Fire Safety Order Compliance Checklist

- Ensure the grease extract system is included in the school's Fire Risk Assessments;
- Have the system professionally inspected for presence of fire hazardous grease deposits;
- Have grease accumulations removed by specialist contractor with at least full accreditation to HVCA and £10m liability insurance;
- For Insurance and Fire Service inspection demand a detailed certificate on completed work showing clearly what has been cleaned;
- Have extract system inspected and cleaned regularly.

Richard Norman

Richard Norman is Managing Director of Indepth Hygiene Services Limited, which is the U.K.'s leading provider of specialist ventilation system cleaning and a member of the HVCA (Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association). The firm checks out whether your grease extract system is a potential fire hazard and provide you with a 'risk of fire survey'. It will be carried out free of charge and will tell you whether or not you are complying with the Fire Safety Order and the terms of your insurance policy. To arrange for a risk of fire survey to be carried out please call 020 8661 7888 or email ductclean@indepthhygiene.co.uk.