

Get 'em While They're Hot

Would you like to know more about how kitchen exhaust systems are supposed to be installed and serviced?

Phil Ackland's Kitchen Exhaust Inspection Seminars

Phil Ackland's Training Programs provide 1- and 2-Day Seminars to Fire Officials on how to inspect kitchen exhaust systems.

I had the opportunity to take Phil's AHJ course this spring. I can tell, from a former fire official's point of view, the exhaust cleaning industry is a disaster, and so is the inspection side. Prior to the course we relied solely on that cleaning label on the canopy. Now we realize that more is needed.

~ Sandy Mackenzie - Retired Calgary Fire Marshal

The 1-Hour Presentations feature a number of timely issues relating to commercial kitchen exhaust systems.

- Recognizing Common Deficiencies in Kitchen Exhaust Systems
- Remove the Fuel - Remove the Fire!
- The Problem is Access

These presentations are fashioned to fit into any gathering - from 5 to 500.

The 1- and 2-Day seminars train fire officials on what to look for within exhaust systems; how systems are supposed to be installed and maintained. Inspectors will see the hard reality that many systems are not installed properly. They will discover the poor installation practices that prevent the proper removal of combustible grease build-up.

One almost universal installation deficiency is the failure of building contractors to install hinge kits on fans so the fan can be tipped for inspection and cleaning. This hinging requirement has been in the NFPA #96 and most all other Fire Codes for years. Yet to this day, the majority of up-blast type restaurant exhaust fans are not being hinged.

Without a hinging system of some sort, the underneath area of the fan and the duct below are inaccessible to cleaning or inspections. Hinging is only one serious deficiency, there are many more.

Phil Ackland's Programs provide inspectors and investigators with questions they should ask of property owners and all service providers (fire suppression and exhaust cleaners in particular). These questions put people on notice that the AHJ knows what he is talking about and they better pay attention!

The Programs also demonstrate the difficulties involved in cleaning exhaust systems. Inspectors learn that they have to look beyond the "hood sticker." The AHJ, insurance and restaurant industries will learn of the benefits of using trained, qualified and certified

companies that conform to Phil Ackland's Cleaner Certification Protocol, developed under an ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management System.

Fields/persons that will benefit from the Inspector's Seminars:

Building Inspectors

The Programs emphasize how important it is that kitchen exhaust systems are installed properly. Proper initial installation makes a huge difference in future maintenance and fire safety by alleviating problems such as no access or poor clearances.

Fire Inspectors

Fire inspectors inherit the responsibility of exhaust systems that were not properly installed in the first place. During the Programs inspectors learn where to look to find serious weaknesses in an exhaust or suppression system. Fire inspectors see how difficult it can be to service systems that are not installed up to Code. They also get a better understanding of what they should expect from service providers. We work to encourage cooperation between the various levels of government and private companies that are installing and servicing these systems.

Restaurants

Restaurants are paying money to have their exhaust systems cleaned properly. But in an unacceptable number this is not happening. Certified Cleaners are charged with cleaning the entire system or telling the customer of inaccessibility and other deficiencies (NFPA #96 8-3.1.2, 1998 Edition and 11.4.13, 2001 Edition). These deficiencies could be serious fire hazards.

Insurance Industry

The insurance industry pays out millions of dollars because of exhaust system fires. Loss control agents and insurance officials will learn what to look for in system weaknesses and what to expect from qualified service providers. They will see how knowledgeable inspectors (AHJ's) and trained cleaners can protect restaurants and insurance company losses by documenting deficiencies and informing property owners. The insurance industry is becoming increasingly aware that cleaning personnel are supposed to be trained. The day is coming when cleaners will have considerably more difficulty (and expense) getting insurance if they are not properly certified.

There are not that many fires in kitchen exhaust systems but when they happen they are very expensive. Beyond the loss of the building and risk to fire fighters, these businesses are usually shut down for months, earnings, wages, taxes are lost. Yet with only a little education, much of this could be prevented.

These Programs are lively and very interactive. They use a combination of Power Point, video of kitchen inspections (2-Day course goes on actual kitchen tours), demonstrations and insightful question and answer periods.

AHJ's may not know about NFPA #96 today, but I guarantee you, once they have attended one of my Inspectors courses they will have a whole new appreciation for the complexity and false security of many exhaust and fire suppression systems. They will also appreciate the importance of requiring trained and qualified service providers. Service providers who know their responsibilities are willing to report deficiencies and see that these systems are serviced properly.
~ Phil Ackland

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