

Potential for Fire is Great

The environment within an active commercial cooking operation possesses the potential for a number of insurance related incidences. In food preparation, speed is of the essence; food is prepared over heat, often open flames. These conditions, and a variety of others, generate large volumes of grease vapors and resultant build-up. These combustible fuels (grease and cooking residues) accumulate in, behind and around cooking appliances, as well as within the ventilation systems. This grease can plug valves, imbalance burner orifices, make control contacts sticky, reduce insulating values and generally wear out equipment. On top of this, the strain on equipment and improper or inadequate maintenance of a multitude of components can create serious fire hazards.

When a fire occurs in a commercial kitchen, the original ignition point is generally the cooking fuel, but if the fail-safes within the various systems do not function as designed, far greater damage can take place. When this happens there can be an array of contributing factors. Sorting these various responsibilities out can be complicated.

Restaurants have increased reliance on technology in an attempt to create more food products with fewer people. This often results in proper preventative maintenance slipping through the cracks. When this happens, accidents can and do take place.

With the increased level of specialization, even in maintenance, restaurant owners have to rely on a growing number of people to keep all cooking and ventilation equipment running properly. A partial list of what a restaurant requires in the way of service, is:

- Ventilation cleaning requirements
- Cooking Appliance repairs
- Fire Suppression technicians (both fixed pipe and portable)
- Gas fittings and electrical energy
- Multi-level air balancing
- Water wash hoods and complex ventilation filtration equipment
- Rooftop/fan maintenance

Phil Ackland's knowledge and experience in these and other areas, qualifies him as an expert in this field. He brings with him 12 years of expert witness experience to Lawyers and Insurance Companies.

About the author: Phil Ackland has been in the commercial kitchen field for nearly 40 years. He is a member of the NFPA 96 Committee. He has written a number of books on the subjects of Installing, Inspecting and Servicing commercial kitchen exhaust systems (two are referenced in the 2004 NFPA#96). His company is ISO 2001 Certified. He offers training and certification to cleaners, Fire and Building Officials and the insurance profession. He assists fire investigators and attorney with kitchen system related insurance liability claims.

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