January 2014, Volume 5 Issue 3

Food for thought

A newsletter for Fairfax County food establishment owners and operators and their employees

What is FOG?

Fats, **O**il and **G**rease! **FOG** comes from foods such as cooking oil, lard, shortening, meat fats, sauces, gravy, mayonnaise, butter, ice cream and soups. Wastewaters from sinks, dishwashers, hoods and floors and food scraps are also sources of FOG. Grease discharges are predominantly from washing and cleaning operations (washing the grease down the drain), not from deep frying, as many people think.

Why is FOG a problem?

Grease causes the formation of solid deposits along the walls of the sewers, which reduces sewer capacity. These deposits can lead to the breakaway of accumulated FOG and clog sewer lines, causing sewer backups inside a restaurant or backups through sewer manholes onto private property and the streets. Food service establishments that are found responsible for improper FOG disposal ***may be held liable for cleanup and repair costs related to sanitary sewer damage, backups and overflows.***

How to Properly Dispose of Fats, Oils and Grease

The most effective way to solve the FOG problem is to keep this material out of the sewer system.

- Wipe off dishes, pots, pans and cooking utensils before washing instead of rinsing down the drain.
- Collect waste cooking oils in grease barrels and schedule the pickup of the barrels before they are full. Store grease barrels away from storm sewers.
- Install a grease trap (typically inside) or grease interceptor (typically outside) to trap the FOG before it enters the county sewer lines. Check the depth of grease and food solids in the trap/interceptor regularly.
- Grease traps may be cleaned by restaurant staff or a licensed sewage handler. Schedule regular cleaning before the combined grease and solids layers total more than 25% of total capacity. The total capacity is the depth from the bottom of the outlet pipe to the bottom of the tank.

Keep a record of the cleanout dates. Post the maintenance log near the three compartment sink or maintain in a file. Fairfax County

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Food Safety Reminders

- Wash Hands Often!
- Don't handle ready-to-eat foods with bare hands.
- Report symptoms of foodborne illness to management.
- Food must come from an approved source.
- Cook foods to proper temperatures.
- Use a food thermometer!
- Keep hot foods ***HOT*** — above 135°F.
- Keep cold foods ***COLD*** — below 41°F.
- Keep foods out of the ***Danger Zone*** (41°F - 135°F).
- Wash, rinse and sanitize food-contact surfaces regularly.
- Wash Hands Often!

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How Important is Handwashing?

Proper handwashing is an important step in preventing the spread of foodborne illness. When was the last time that you really thought about the process of washing your hands? There are six steps to washing your hands properly:

1) Use warm or hot water.
2) Use soap and make a lather.
3) Rub and scrub thoroughly for 20 seconds – sing "Happy Birthday" twice!
4) Be sure to get the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your fingernails.
5) Rinse well.
6) Dry hands completely and use a paper towel to shut off the faucet.

Hands should only be washed at the handsinks provided in the food service areas or restrooms. The 3-compartment sink or prep sink should not be used for handwashing because without soap and paper towels, neither allows for effective handwashing. At the same time, handsinks are not meant to be used as dump sinks. In order for hands to be cleaned properly, they must be washed in a clean area.

Proper handwashing includes both washing and timely washing. It is not just how employees wash their hands, but when they wash their hands, as well. Consider these questions: Are employees washing their hands before they start the work assignments? Are they washing their hands when they change tasks? Are they washing hands when they change gloves? In each instance, the answer should be yes, without exception. In addition, remember that handsinks must be completely functional with hot and cold water and include soap and paper towels. This is as much a management responsibility as the training of employees on proper handwashing.

For more information about proper handwashing, ask your area inspector or visit the Health Department website at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd. Handwashing signs are also available on the website or from the area inspector.

What is FOG?

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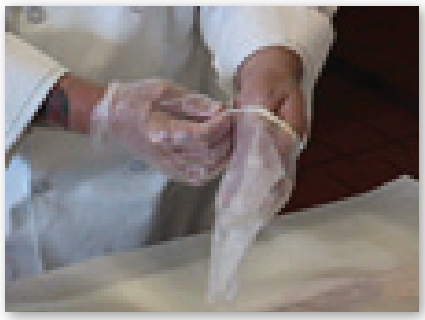
Public Works inspectors may request this record during periodic inspections.

A brochure with more information regarding grease traps and proper maintenance is included with your 2014 Permit to Operate a Food Service Establishment. More information will also be available on the Health Department website.

This information was provided by the Fairfax County Health Department in partnership with the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES). If you have any questions, please call the DPWES, Industrial Waste Section at 703-550-9740, extension 252, TTY 711.

Proper Use of Gloves

Bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods can be a contributing factor to the risk of a foodborne illness. The use of single-use, disposable gloves is a very good means of preventing bare-hand contact. It is also a good practice for employees to use disposable gloves when handling raw foods such as ground beef and chicken. Proper use of gloves and proper changing of gloves can be a big help in preventing cross-contamination. Wash hands with soap and water before putting on clean gloves.



While wearing gloves an employee should be limited to a single task requiring the glove use. Gloves become contaminated just like bare hands. When changing tasks, gloves should be removed and changed if necessary. Do not wash gloves! When gloves are changed, hands must be washed before putting on the clean gloves.

Hands and clean gloves can potentially become contaminated while removing a used pair of gloves. With proper glove use—and, particularly, proper changing of gloves—the risk of foodborne illness through cross-contamination can be reduced.

Stay Connected!

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