



Restaurants and other food service businesses generate tons of cooking oil and grease wastes every day. If this waste is not managed properly, it can cause major environmental problems. Much of this waste is in solid form; it can be safely packaged and either placed in the trash or sent to a composter for processing. Liquid waste containing oil and grease dumped directly into the sewer, however, can block the system and cause wastewater to back up into your restaurant. This causes a disruption in your business and a health hazard for you and your customers. If your business generates greasy wastewater, you can reduce the likelihood of a sewer back-up by adopting good housekeeping practices, reducing the amount of inappropriate wastes that go down your drains, and by installing and properly maintaining a grease trap.

What is a grease trap?

Grease traps, also called grease interceptors, are specialized tanks that capture the oil and grease in hot greasy wastewater by slowing down the flow of water and allowing it to cool. As it cools, the grease and oil separate out of the water and float to the top of the trap, while solids accumulate at the bottom. The cooler water continues to flow out of the trap to the sewer while baffles and screens in the trap help keep the accumulated grease and solids from flowing out.

The size of the grease trap depends largely on how much waste your business produces and how often you perform trap maintenance. The local or county government in your area usually has specific ordinances or regulations for the sizes and types of grease traps necessary for your business. Grease traps may be located inside or outside of the building. Traps that are located inside the building tend to be smaller and require more frequent maintenance. Traps that are located outside the building tend to be larger and may be less disruptive to maintain. Outside grease traps will operate differently depending on the outdoor temperature and tend to clog more often in cold weather. As a business owner/manager, you should know where the grease trap, drain lines and cleanouts are located at your business.

Why is grease trap maintenance important?

Proper cleaning and maintenance of the grease trap and drain line reduces the amount of solids and grease going into the public sewer system and minimizes the likelihood of backups or blockages. Most sanitation districts and municipalities require businesses that produce fats, oils and grease to install grease traps. These districts and municipalities also require the traps be periodically inspected and maintained. This is because oil and grease in the wastewater decreases sewer pipe capacity over time and eventually will cause the pipe to clog. Piping systems without grease traps must be cleaned more often and piping may have to be replaced sooner than otherwise expected. Excessive grease sent to the wastewater treatment plant can also overload their system and cause the facility to exceed its allowable discharge limits.

Running extremely hot water down the drain only moves the problem downstream and may only make it worse. Fixing a sewer line blockage can be expensive in terms of lost customers and repair costs. If the pipe clog is within your building's sewer line, you will be responsible for fixing the problem and paying all costs. If the clog is in the public sewer line and can be traced to your business, you will be liable for paying all or a portion of the repair costs. Accumulating the oil and grease close to the source in a properly maintained grease trap is the most cost-effective way to prevent this.

What are your options for maintaining your grease trap?

You will need to inspect the trap and have it cleaned of grease and other accumulated wastes on a regular basis. The transport and disposal of waste grease is regulated under Colorado's solid waste regulations [6 CCR 1007-2, Section 18]. If you have more than 55 gallons of waste grease to dispose, you must hire a registered waste grease transporter to remove the waste grease and dispose of it. The Division's website, www.colorado.gov/cdphe/wastegrease, has a

list of registered waste grease transporters who can accept the waste. The transporter must complete a full pump-out of the trap's contents when it is emptied and the waste must be manifested using the waste grease manifest form.

Waste grease must be sent to a registered waste grease collection facility for disposal. This is commonly a composting facility, biodiesel manufacturer or landfill that has registered with the Division to accept waste grease. Waste grease may also be taken to wastewater treatment facilities if they have been permitted to accept it.

Are there other options?

There are several brands and types of biological grease digesters that you can add to your grease trap to help reduce the amount of grease that accumulates in the trap. These often include hybrid bacteria designed to convert the grease to less problematic wastes like carbon dioxide and water, and many are advertised to reduce noxious odors. Be aware that some drain cleaners and bacterial agents may only soften the grease and transfer the problem farther downstream, even when used properly. Your municipality or sanitation district may limit or prohibit the use of these digesters.

For more information:

**Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Division**
4300 Cherry Creek Drive South
Denver, Colorado 80246-1530

Customer Technical Assistance
(303) 692-3320
(888) 569-1831 ext. 3320 toll-free
Website: www.colorado.gov/cdphe/hm
E-mail: comments.hmwmd@state.co.us

This Compliance Bulletin is intended to provide guidance on the appropriate management of wastes based on Colorado solid and hazardous waste statutes and regulations only. The wastes described in this guidance may be regulated under other statutes and regulations.

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