choosing a professional exhaust cleaning contractor

guidelines and best practices

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the majority of restaurant fires originate on the kitchen cooking appliances and flare into the kitchen exhaust system. Regular inspection, cleaning and maintenance of a restaurant's kitchen exhaust system is one of the primary defenses against fire hazards.

By keeping these systems working at their best, they will evacuate the smoke and grease out of the building and produce a cleaner, cooler kitchen and better working environment for staff.

When contracting for cleaning services, it is important to ensure you get a complete cleaning of your entire system. Some contractors offer a "hood cleaning" service which does not include the duct work or rooftop fan.

While such services may keep the interior of the kitchen looking sharp, they do little to secure fire safety and reduce health threats.

Only a complete cleaning of the system - from the hood in the kitchen to the fan on the roof - will reduce the risk of kitchen fires and ensure compliance with fire regulations.

Many companies are available today to clean kitchen exhaust. However, most companies do not clean to any standards, or just clean to the bare minimums. With 59% of all restaurant fires starting in the kitchen, it is more important than ever to make sure you hire a qualified profession that cleans to the highest standards.

When hiring a professional consultant or contractor it is important to hire a company with qualified and certified staff that follows industry standards and guidelines to ensure a job done right.

Most importantly, one must have clear understanding of the scope of work being provided under any agreement. Often, firms believe they purchase a cleaning of the entire system only to discover later that they have received a "Hood Washing".

WHEN YOU ARE CHOOSING A SERVICE PROVIDER, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

THE "COMPLETE" JOB
Make sure the job was done and that the contractor has cleaned the entire system. Be familiar with the routing of the exhaust ductwork, which may be above the ceiling and in the walls, and make sure the complete operation after the cleaning. Always get in writing what the cleaning contractor proposes for the scope of work, and how the work will be done. Ask that the work be done by an industry "Certi-fied" contractor, with proof of insurance and a complete post service report.

ENSURE PROPER ACCESS
Building codes state that the interior of the system shall be "reasonably accessible for inspection and cleaning." As a general rule, if the ductwork interior cannot be inspected, it cannot be cleaned properly.

ACCESS PANELS
The system may require Access Panels to be installed to allow appropriate access for the cleaning contractor. A professional company will tell you when this is needed and may be able to provide the service to you. And, when they are done, current NFPA standards require that they put a sticker on each Access Panel, showing when it was last opened and who did the work.

ACCESSING THE FAN
All kitchen exhaust systems are equipped with fans/blowers, which must be included within the scope of cleaning. Regardless of the type fan, always inquire with the cleaning contractor as to how your unit will be cleaned. If they never climb up to the roof, they may never clean the fan.

FREQUENCY OF CLEANING
All kitchen exhaust systems require cleaning. The frequency can be determined by the volume of cooking. NFPA suggests inspecting the system on a regular basis to determine the needed frequency of cleaning. In general, the more you cook, the more frequently the system will need to be cleaned. Regular cleaning of grease filters and proper operation of automatic wash systems (where equipped) will greatly reduce the overall system load.

CERTIFICATE OF PERFORMANCE
Professional cleaning contractors will supply a certificate of performance (hood sticker), which is posted at or near the hood as proof of service. At a minimum, this certificate should indicate the date of inspection or cleaning, the name of the servicing company and person performing the work, areas not cleaned and next service due date.

SERVICE FOLLOW UP
Your cleaning contractor should submit a complete system service report at the conclusion of their work. This report will document any mechanical issues, areas not cleaned (and why), issues of accessibility, and other safety concerns. Ultimately, it is up to the restaurant to be compliant. Look for a service report to help guide you.

THE IKECA DIFFERENCE
Not all exhaust cleaning is "complete."

KITCHEN EXHAUST PROFESSIONALS SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE YOU WITH:

- Company qualifications, including certifications
- Start and completion dates for the project
- Certificates of insurance and applicable licenses
- References
- A Service Report at the end of the job

The good news is that there is an easy way to make sure that you hire qualified companies to handle your cleaning needs. The International Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning Association is the largest non-profit organization dedicated to Exhaust Cleaning, Industry Certification, and Standard Development, such as ANSI/IKECA C-10: Standard for Cleaning of Commercial Exhaust Systems.

Since 1989, IKECA has been the industry leader in setting the highest standards for kitchen exhaust cleaners in the US, Canada and Internationally.

IKECA Members are required to meet insurance requirements, to maintain staff certified to IKECA standards, and to abide by the strictest Code of Conduct in the industry.

IKECA MEMBERS ARE ALL AROUND THE WORLD.

To locate one near you, visit our website at www.ikeca.org, or call us at 410-417-5234.

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Industry’s Leader in Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning

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