

## **A Universal Approach to Compliance**

### **Nelson Dilg**

#### **The industry's new standard for cleaning commercial kitchen exhaust systems**

Adhering to a common standard in kitchen exhaust system cleaning has long been a challenge for both food service operators and cleaning contractors. While industrial standards exist, there has been minimal adoption and poor understanding of the standards, which has led to an absence of universal application. In short, different requirements in different places have resulted in great diversity in local norms and great difficulty in getting all contractors to “read from the same sheet of music.”

Though food service operators, both retail and institutional, have long recognized and feared the potential for fire in a poorly maintained kitchen exhaust system, they have been challenged in knowing how to properly mitigate that threat—until now. Finally, our industry has a comprehensive and robust standard for the cleaning of commercial kitchen exhaust systems.

#### **Achieving Consensus**

To prevent fires in commercial kitchen exhaust systems, which can result in incalculable property damage and tragic fatalities, the International Kitchen Exhaust Cleaners Association (IKECA), together with other industry and government professionals, formed a consensus body. Their goal was to create standards for the safe operation of kitchen exhaust systems, and this standards-setting body has been recognized by The American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

The purpose of the ANSI/IKECA consensus body is to develop cleaning, inspection and maintenance standards to be adopted by state and local fire authorities. Also, it strives to lend easy-to-understand, comprehensive and widely applicable guidelines to food service operators to give them confidence in the safety of their operations. The consensus body also works closely with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

#### **Industry-Wide Fire Safety**

The first standard, the Standard for Cleaning of Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Systems (C-10-2011), was published in 2012. In 2013, it was adopted by The International Code Council (ICC) and is included in the 2015 International Fire Code (IFC). This brings the standardization of system fire safety as close to being the “law of the land” as it will ever be.

There now exists the clearest and most universal measure and guide for cleaning commercial kitchen exhaust systems. Corporate adherence to the ANSI/IKECA C-10 standard is the surest and most defensible means of demonstrating that one has applied commonly accepted norms in the prevention of fire and in keeping with the highest and best thinking to date.

The standard includes everything food service operators need to determine the fire-safe condition of their kitchen exhaust system. When selecting a cleaning contractor, be sure to obtain the contractor's written guarantee that all of their work, qualifications and reporting are in strict adherence to this standard.

The standard is available in print through either ANSI or IKECA. Given all that is at risk in the event of fire in a food service facility, it should have its proper place in every food service operator's procedure manual. At last, we have kitchen exhaust system compliance for all.

Nelson Dilg is the President of Nelbud Services Group Inc. He is also a member of the ANSI/IKECA consensus body, the Technical Committee for NFPA Standard 96, and a frequent speaker and writer on the subject of fire safety in commercial cooking operations.