

Facility Manager Project Profile

Don Turner

PLUMBING PRESENTATION

A facility manager discovers a drainage problem — running under a neighboring restaurant

How long have you been in the restaurant industry? I have been in the restaurant industry since 1975.

What is your official title? How long have you been at Darden, and what concepts are you responsible for? I am a facility manager for all locations of The Capital Grille, an Eddie V's brand— 74 in total.

You experienced a serious underground drainage problem with one of your stores. What was the issue? The restaurant is now three years old. Occasional backups in the kitchen occurred during busy periods. Plumbers tried snaking the lines and thought each time the problem was resolved. This was handled by operations, and I was informed after a couple repeat problems.

How long did the backups go on before you realized there was a major problem? About a week after I was informed, backups occurred in the floor drains in restrooms and behind the bar, which indicated a much larger problem.

Did you initially use a camera to attempt to find the blockage in the back-of-house drain line? We used a camera and a hydrojet to go from cleanouts and from outside into the building. They immediately found that a couple cleanouts were non-serviceable since they were either not identified in the plans or were tied to the sewer lines by a double "Y." So the camera and the hydrojet went up the opposing side of the "Y" to appear below another drain, not down the sewer pipe. We could not go down any drain nor cleanout to get to the backup. The outside cleanouts were for the sanitary lines, and our problem was in the grease line.

Where did you end up digging? How many holes were required? We immediately chose to dig up one of the sewer line cleanouts and expose the sewer line itself so we could run it directly. We did this well into the kitchen so we could clean most of the line from that location.

When we sent the hydrojet down the line, we ran into another double "Y" and could go no further. This started the process of going as far as we could and punching another hole in the floor to get around another double "Y." At one time, we thought we found the location where the line was leading out of the building; we dug a hole there and were fooled. The line stayed in the building and entered under another tenant's space, across their kitchen and under their walk-in cooler. That is where we found a cleanout we could not access.

Did you have proper plumbing drawings available? We had drawings, but they were incorrect. After completion we found out the landlord's plumbing contractor had delivered the grease line to our space via the route under the then-unfinished space next to us. It was a shorter sewer line run for the sub-landlord's plumbing contractor to a landlord controlled common grease trap. The double "Y" connections are legal in this jurisdiction and proved to be easier for the plumbers. We removed the double "Ys" and installed additional cleanouts prior to restoration of the floor.

How did you coordinate with the restaurant next door and the landlord or property manager? We had to get the landlord involved to gain access and get approval to dig in the neighboring kitchen to locate the line and add a cleanout.

Was your restaurant closed during the digging phase? When we experienced several kitchen drains backing up, we stopped dish operations to begin drain line cleanings to get the blockages clear. Eventually we were required to close the restaurants for two and a half days while working out the problems.

Did the property next to you have to shut down? Were they experiencing backups, too? Yes, they had to be shut down for a day while we dug up our line in their kitchen, added an accessible cleanout, found the problem and cleared the line. They had not had the same problem at that time.

Was the final blockage located in your neighbor's property and, if so, what was it? There was a blockage downstream from us composed of grease, food and debris.

Have you experienced any additional backups since these repairs? We have had no repeat problems in the past two years.

Do you utilize periodic line jetting for your restaurants? We periodically hydrojet in restaurants that have a history of backups.

In hindsight, what was your biggest takeaway on this project? To change the documentation with landlords when working on a lease to better detail where we will accept utility hookups and their path to and away from our location. Also, to change construction plumbing documents to note only what is minimally acceptable. It's important to note that all other local allowances below these standards are not to be permitted. It is hard in our jobs, but we shouldn't be surprised when subcontractors, landlords or your own construction general contractor takes cost-cutting measures.

Don Turner, CRFP, is a Facility Manager for The Capital Grille, an Eddie V's brand. He has been part of the restaurant industry for more than 40 years.