

# Facility Manager Project Profile

Jay Andruk

UP in FLAMES

AN AUSTIN, TEXAS-BASED RESTAURANT COMPANY EXPLORES LESSONS LEARNED AFTER A FIRE

How long have you been in the restaurant industry? Andruk: 24 years. LeBoeuf: Six years.

What is your official title, and how long have you been at K&N Management? Andruk: Facilities and Fleet Manager; 12 years; LeBoeuf: Facility Technician, Mighty Fine Cleaning Crew manager; six years

What concepts does K&N operate? K&N operates 10 locations: four Rudy's Country Store & BBQ locations; four Mighty Fine Burgers, Fries, and Shakes stores; one Mighty Fine Burgers, Fries, and Shakes Food Truck; and one Mighty Fine Burgers, Fries, and Shakes Food Trailer. We also operate and maintain a corporate office, an extension office, two carwashes, a small warehouse and a storage building.

Are all the restaurants in the state of Texas? All are in the state of Texas, specifically the Austin area.

How is the facilities department structured? We have seven in-house technicians, with a facility and fleet manager overseeing the technicians. The facility manager reports directly to the president of K&N. Additionally, we have two in-house overnight cleaning crews—one for Rudy's with six to seven team members and one for Mighty Fine with five team members. Each crew has an onsite supervisor. We handle 90 percent of facilities work in-house but use well-vetted vendor partners for specialty work and larger projects as needed.

There was a fire at one of your Rudy's Country Store and BBQ locations recently. Briefly describe the circumstances surrounding the fire. The store was closing. Team members were in the process of closing duties, including daily cleaning and organization. A team member was organizing a BBQ smoker room when a flat cart was pushed against the pit fire box door and left it against the hot surface.

How do the wood-fired cookers work? Oyster pits use wood to cook the meat. We use 100-percent oak wood, which contains a lot of potential heat energy that can be managed efficiently using ventilation systems. They are thermostatically controlled using several air control dampers. The dampers open and close to control the temperature and smoke in the pit.

What time did the fire start? Did store personnel attempt to put it out? The fire started around 10 p.m. and grew too smoky to be put out by team members. The manager called 911 right away, evacuated the store and ensured that all team members were accounted for and safe. Team member safety is our No. 1 priority, and we're happy with our manager's decision-making.

How quickly did the fire department arrive, and how long did it take to extinguish the blaze? The fire department was on site within 10 minutes of the call and extinguished the fire 15 minutes later. This involved venting the roof. The fire department investigation team was on site to find the root cause for about 90 minutes. The building was released back to us by midnight.

What parts of the restaurant were affected? Our Group Meal Room, which is the production area for call-in to-go orders, and our Pit No. 4 room, which houses our large Oyler 1300 pit, were affected.

How soon were you notified of the incident? We were notified before 10:30 p.m. Our company prides itself on efficient and thorough communication, and all senior leadership team members were in the loop quickly and ready to act.

What immediate actions were taken to schedule the clean-up and repair process? On the way to the location, our owners, operations director, electrician, general contractor, cleaning crew and fire remediation vendors were called to meet immediately. Our plan of action included:

- Get Serve Pro on site immediately to begin cleaning up water and smoke damage right after the fire department released the building back to us.
- Pull emergency permits with the city for construction and electrical repair.
- Have an electrician disconnect all power and breakers to affected rooms.
- Have a general contractor immediately begin cleanup and removal of roof, trusses, insulation, lighting and ceiling tiles, and haul away debris before 6 a.m.
- Have a cleaning crew help haul away debris and pressure wash affected site before 6 a.m.

That morning, our plan of action included organizing in-house facility technicians to check all store kitchen equipment for proper operations, and cleaning all HVAC, cooler and ice machines.

We called NUCO2 for emergency repairs to our distribution hoses and to check the system, our fire alarm and security vendor to repair damaged lines and ensure the system is working after repairs and our HVAC vendor to check units directly affected by the fire.

How soon did the local health Inspector show up? What were the findings? The health inspector was on site before the fire department investigation was complete. The inspector closed the restaurant due to water and smoke damage.

How many vendors were involved with getting the store ready for reopening? When did the store reopen? Eight vendors were involved in the project. The store was open by 10 a.m. that morning after completing the health inspection.

Were the fire-affected areas tarped off? Yes, and this allowed us to operate our restaurant very close to normal. Our other restaurants assisted with cooking briskets, which was the primary function of the Oyler pit that was damaged in the fire.

Since Rudy's has a substantial catering business, how were the pending orders completed? Catering orders were outsourced to three Austin Rudy's locations. Guests were called and notified of where to pick up their orders, and we gave them the option to have the meal delivered. Within a couple days, we were able to bring these large orders back to the restaurant by implementing logistical changes within our space.

Were new procedures put in place to prevent this type of fire in the future?

We have taken several steps to prevent this type of fire in the future. First, we added clear "fire lines" around all the Oylar smoker boxes. We temporarily used red paint but have moved to a permanent method where we embedded a metal marker in the floor that cannot wear off.

We also have a safety manager who inspects that these fire lines are being heeded. Our training department regularly reviews fire safety training, and we have added additional fire extinguishers in our restaurants. In the described case, we do not believe the additional extinguishers would have helped, but we identified other areas where they might help in a future fire situation, and we added them as a proactive measure.

Carl LeBoeuf, CRFP, has a broad background in operations and construction management. For the past six years, LeBoeuf has worked as a facility technician and special project manager for K&N Management in Austin, Texas. He has a bachelor's of science degree in construction management from Everglades University.

Jay Andruk, CRFP, is a facilities manager with K&N Management. Andruk has worked in the restaurant industry for 25 years and has been with K&N for just under 12 years. He is a member of the company's Safety Team and Community Impact Team. He previously worked with Little Caesars and Krispy Kreme, as well as smaller local establishments. He holds a bachelor's degree from Syracuse University.