

Avoid Fines and Health Risks from Grease Overflows

Grease-related overflows are costly to clean up, and may expose restaurant customers or employees, food service workers, and others to health risks, or threaten wildlife by going to local creeks and the Bay untreated. Here are some tips for avoiding grease waste problems.

- If your restaurant or food service facility produces grease wastes, make sure you have a properly sized grease removal device.
- Never dispose of grease wastes directly to the sewer, or in the trash dumpster. Contract with a grease disposal company for waste grease pick-up.
- Maintain your grease trap or grease interceptor on a regular basis. If you are unsure of the proper maintenance frequency, contact your disposal service or your treatment plant representative. (These agencies are listed by a number of titles, including Environmental Compliance, Water Pollution Control, Industrial Waste, Source Control, and Industrial Pretreatment Program.)

Sizing Grease Removal Devices

If you are required to install a grease removal device, it must be properly sized or it may not work. Retrofitting an improperly sized device can be very costly. There are firms that specialize in sizing these devices. In most areas, plans to install these devices must also be reviewed by the wastewater authority. If you are planning to install a grease removal device in a new restaurant or food service facility, or to retrofit an existing restaurant or food service facility, be sure to contact your local wastewater treatment authority for their requirements.

Grease Waste Disposal

Establishments that generate waste grease should contract with a grease disposal company for pick-up. Interceptors must be cleaned by a cleaning service. Grease should never be discharged directly to the sewer, or disposed of in the trash dumpster. In many areas, there are significant fines for doing so.

Grease Device Maintenance

Contract with a waste hauler. Make sure the hauler you select is familiar with local requirements for grease waste hauling and disposal. Pump interceptors dry and wash down to remove grease from the sides and baffles inside the unit each time the interceptor is pumped out. Do not allow your waste hauler to decant wastewater back into the grease interceptor. Your company or restaurant representative should always be present to confirm proper pumping.

More about Grease Removal Devices

When wastewater from food service facilities contains grease, the hot water and soap used in washing dishes and equipment emulsifies or breaks up the grease, allowing it to flow freely through the sewer. As the wastewater cools, the grease congeals (forms clumps) causing backups and overflows of raw sewage. Grease removal devices like interceptors and grease traps are designed to prevent grease-related problems in the sanitary sewer.

What's the difference between grease traps and interceptors?

An interceptor is a big, concrete box partitioned off to remove grease and food waste by trapping things that float and things that settle to the bottom. (See Figure 1 below.) A grease trap is a smaller unit that works by the same principles. Usually, interceptors are installed in the ground outside a food service facility, and grease traps are installed indoors, often under a counter. Grease traps, if approved, are usually reserved for small establishments, and because they're smaller, may need more frequent service.

Is my business required to have a grease removal device?

Your local wastewater agency probably requires installation of a grease removal device if your wastewater contains grease, oils, fats, sediments, particulate matter, or any other material that can impair the flow of the wastewater through the municipal sanitary sewer.

What if I want to use a different device to remove grease?

Your wastewater discharge must meet specific grease discharge limitations that are set by your service agency. If you believe that your device can meet those limits, you may submit your plan to your service agency for approval. However, you may be required to install the standard device, or adhere to your municipal ordinance or Uniform Plumbing Code for installation of alternative grease removal devices.

Figure 1

