

Commercial food service fire risk management

You work hard to build and maintain your business. That's why it's important to ensure you're protected from all potential losses – especially when they're avoidable.

A proper maintenance program – which includes establishing effective fire prevention and detection practices – can help ensure the safety and value of your premises, by minimizing the risk of a catastrophic fire.



Safety tips for fire damage prevention

Regular maintenance and awareness are important when it comes to keeping your operations safe from fire damage. The following practical tips can help prevent a commercial kitchen fire on your premises:

- ✓ Keep your kitchen operations tidy and store items properly – housekeeping is an important factor in fire prevention.
- ✓ Check and service all gas burners regularly, including the operation of all high temperature shut-offs, automatic shut-offs and manual controls.
- ✓ Never operate equipment with any metal shields missing.
- ✓ Hire a licensed and qualified contractor for all gas related work (natural gas or propane).
- ✓ Shut all equipment down to clean and degrease inside and out thoroughly each week.
- ✓ Steam clean exhaust hoods regularly, using a qualified, licensed contractor. Ensure your contractor applies a sticker to the hood showing when the cleaning was done and by whom, and when it will be done next.
- ✓ Ensure your fire protection system meets the standards of the local fire code by checking with your fire equipment contractor or local fire officials.
- ✓ Use the services of a licensed and qualified contractor to inspect and maintain your fire protection system regularly, and request a written report of the inspection for your records and for insurance purposes.
- ✓ Ensure your kitchen is fitted with the recommended number of 6 litre potassium bicarbonate (Purple K) hand held fire extinguishers, which are designed to put out small fires caused by modern light oils.
- ✓ Hire a qualified, licensed contractor to perform the following tasks annually:
 - inspect electrical equipment
 - ensure connections are tight
 - test equipment to ensure it operates correctly
 - clean motors and other related components

Note: Every five years, have electrical wiring checked with a thermal scanner (an infra-red detector) which will clearly show any hot spots created by loose or improper connection, failing parts, or overloaded wiring and more.

- ✓ Hire a linen service company to clean table cloths, rags etc., instead of running your own washer and dryer, to avoid a potential fire caused by spontaneous combustion.
- ✓ Ensure your property is protected with smoke/heat detectors or fire sprinklers. These should be set to trigger an internal alarm as well as an external alarm at a ULC approved fire monitoring service or local fire hall, which can reduce the fire service response time.

- ✓ Consider installing a sprinkler system if your property doesn't have one. Sprinklers will reduce the damage caused by a fire, or control it until the fire department arrives.
- ✓ Designate a smoking area outside and away from your building, gardens and garbage disposal, and supply proper receptacles for butt disposal.
- ✓ Store waste bins (e.g. garbage or waste cooking oil) in a locked cage or walled area at least 3 metres away from your building. Ensure it's well lit to discourage loitering and keep the area clean to minimize vermin and slip and fall hazards. *Note: waste bins should be metal and fitted with lids.*
- ✓ Protect your exterior areas with proper lighting, video surveillance and signs advising the area is being monitored. If people loiter regularly at night, talk to your local police about extra patrols.
- ✓ Remove graffiti or tagging promptly.

Summary

Maintaining your kitchen appliances and infrastructure proactively can help reduce the potential for a commercial kitchen fire, which could have a devastating impact on the future operation of your business.

Resources

NFPA17A - "Standard for Wet Chemical Extinguishing Systems"

NFPA 96 - "Standard for Ventilation Control and Fire Protection of Commercial Cooking Operations"

National Fire Code of Canada - 2010

Identifying fire risk areas

According to industry data, there are several fire risks present in most food service operations, such as:

- deep fryers
- grills and char broilers
- exhaust hoods and ductwork
- electrical appliances including freezers and coolers
- washing machines and dryers
- garbage areas
- arson
- cigarette disposal

*Depending on how heavily your kitchen is used, steam cleaning may be needed quarterly. In some cases your provincial code may require monthly cleaning.

For further information on this topic, please contact your independent insurance broker.

Visit www.avivacanada.com/risks for more Your guide to... information sheets on other loss control topics.

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