



TCPUD Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG) Control Program Frequently Asked Questions for Food Service Establishments (FSEs)

Q: What is FOG?

FOG is the acronym used to collectively refer to Fats, Oils and Grease. FOG can be defined as, “Any substance such as a vegetable or animal product that is used in, or is a byproduct of, the cooking or food preparation process, and that turns or may turn viscous or solidifies with a change in temperature or other conditions.”

Q: Why is FOG control necessary?

Grease can gather in the sewer system causing blockage of sewer flows, resulting in sanitary sewer overflows. The California State Water Resources Control Board requires sewer utilities to develop and enforce a FOG control program to help prevent these types of sewer spills. District Utility Department staff members’ time is frequently spent using costly hydraulic equipment to remove built-up grease from the sewer system.

Q: What types of businesses are considered to be FSEs?

Any commercial business that prepares food or washes any equipment, dishes, etc. that comes in contact with food is considered to be a Food Service Establishment (FSE). Some examples of FSEs include: restaurants, fast food establishments, convenience stores with food preparation, butcher shops, hotels, motels, bed & breakfast establishments, coffee shops, ice cream shops, commercial kitchens, delis, catering facilities, etc.

Q: How does FOG from FSEs cause sewer spills?

When wastewater from FSEs contains grease, the hot water and soap used in washing dishes emulsifies (breaks up) the grease, allowing it to flow freely through the sewer. As the wastewater cools, the grease congeals (hardens) causing blockages, which can lead to backups and overflows of sewage. Regardless of whether the blockage occurs within the FSE’s plumbing, the FSE’s sewer line, or the District’s sewer main, a costly and environmentally damaging sewer spill or backup may occur within your building or outdoors. Grease removal devices like traps and interceptors are designed to prevent FOG-related overflows.



Q: When is FOG control equipment required?

FOG control is required on all facilities that may introduce FOG into the sewer system. If FOG control is warranted, based on the Uniform Plumbing Code and the California Plumbing Code, [District Sewer Ordinance 255, Section 8](#) requires that a grease trap or interceptor be installed under the following conditions:

- When a FSE sells
- On all new or remodeled FSEs
- Following a wastewater backup or discharge due to FOG
- When samples of wastewater discharge exceed 400 mg/L of FOG
- After receiving written notice from the District

Q: Why do I need a FSE license?

The license, issued annually, will identify the contact person for the FSE, and by their signature on the license, the District can ensure that they are informed of these FOG control requirements. Annual renewal will ensure that both the property owner and FSE are aware of any change in District regulations. The license application will provide information to District staff that will help us ensure that your FOG control measures are adequate and current.

Q: How much is a FSE License Fee and what is the money used for?

The FSE license fee for 2015 is \$25.58 per month (\$76.74 per quarter) and will appear on your regular billing statement. This fee is required per [District Sewer Ordinance, Section 8](#) for all FSEs, as FSEs can contribute FOG to the District’s sewer system. FOG in the sewer system requires additional District time and resources to keep sewer lines and sewer lift stations operating correctly, in order to prevent sanitary sewer overflows from occurring.

Additionally, the fees collected help to cover District costs for providing staff to assist you with Kitchen Best Management Practices, assist you with sizing and installing new grease reduction devices, perform discharge sampling, perform routine televised inspections of the building sewer laterals, and perform monthly grease interceptor inspections.

Q: When is a sample port required?

All FSEs must have a sample port located just outside of their structure. New or remodeled FSEs must install the sample port as a part of the permit process. Discharge collected from sample ports will be analyzed to determine if existing FOG control measures are keeping kitchen wastewater below the limit of 400 mg/L of FOG, as set by [District Sewer Ordinance 255, Section 8](#).

Q: How can an FSE limit FOG discharge into the sewer system?

By using Kitchen Best Management Practices, also known as “Kitchen BMPs,” these are practices, procedures and maintenance activities performed by Food Service Establishments to reduce FOG in their wastewater discharge. They include:

- Collecting all cooking grease and liquid oil from pots, pans and fryers in covered grease and oil containers for recycling
- Scraping or dry-wiping excess food and FOG from dishes, pots, pans and fryers
 - This method uses less water, which conserves a precious resource and saves you money on your water bill!
- Installing drain screens on all kitchen drains
- Having spill kits readily available
- Properly maintaining and cleaning exhaust filters, grease traps and interceptors
- An on-going employee training program

The District has a FOG BMP Chart that we can provide to you. Additionally, the District has bilingual laminated posters for display in the cooking area of your FSE, and dish squeegees to wipe plates and cooking dishes before they are washed. Please contact us for these FREE materials. The [FOG BMP Chart](#) and the [FOG BMP Poster](#) are also located online, for your use.

Q: What is the difference between a grease trap and an interceptor?

An interceptor is a large concrete box partitioned off to remove FOG and food waste by trapping particles that float to the top and particles that settle to the bottom. A grease trap is a smaller unit, often stainless steel, which works by the same principles. Typically, interceptors are installed in the ground outside of an FSE, and grease traps are installed indoors, often under a sink or counter. Grease traps, if approved through a District variance, are usually reserved for small establishments with low FOG output. Because grease traps are smaller, they are less efficient and require more frequent servicing.

Q: Is my existing grease trap or interceptor adequate?

The size of your FOG control device depends upon the number of fixtures connected to it and the maintenance schedule. District staff will help you to determine if your existing trap(s) or interceptor is properly sized. If properly sized and frequently cleaned, you should be able to meet the discharge limit of 400 mg/L of FOG. If your discharge exceeds this limit, you may be required to install alternative or additional FOG control devices.

Q: How often should I clean my grease trap or interceptor?

Our staff will help you determine the optimum frequency for grease trap and interceptor service based upon your specific facility. As a reference, grease traps are often cleaned once a week and grease interceptors pumped out once per month. The cleaning frequency will vary due to the type of cuisine, number of meals served and size of your FOG control device. The equipment manufacturer may also have recommendations on the frequency of cleaning and maintenance required.

Q: Are garbage disposals allowed?

Commercial garbage disposals that discharge into the public sewer system are not allowed. Screens should be installed in all sinks receiving food waste, and all collected material shall be placed into the garbage.

Q: Can I use chemical or biological agents to reduce grease?

No; the use of chemical and/or biological agents to dissolve FOG is not allowed. These additives simply move the grease into the sewer system; they don't actually eliminate it. If you have been using these materials, you must discontinue their use. Contact the District to learn about alternative grease control measures.

Q: How do I dispose of the FOG?

Grease traps can be cleaned by the FSE, and you may either contract with a grease hauler to remove the waste or, once properly bagged and mixed with kitty litter, the sanitary landfill may accept it. Grease interceptors must be pumped by a pumping service that you contract with.

The District has a list of companies that perform pumping services in this area. This list is shown on the following page.

For more information:

- Visit our website, at <http://www.tcpud.org/>
- View the District's Sewer Ordinance at <http://www.tcpud.org/download/general/ord255.pdf>
- For any other questions, contact Phillip Tapia, Construction Inspector II at (530) 580-6046 or via email at ptapia@tcpud.org.
- Compliance Services Division Phone: (530) 580-6281
- Main Office Phone: (530) 583-3796
Fax: (530) 583-1475

- Stop by our office:
 - Tahoe City Public Utility District
 - 221 Fairway Drive
 - Tahoe City, CA 96145

FOG HAULERS

The following companies may be available for grease interceptor and grease trap cleaning and disposal.

<u>Hauler</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Cell</u>	<u>Fax</u>
Alpine Septic Service Dave Brewer PO Box 13345 South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151	530-577-7867	530-416-8831	530-573-0990
Easy Rooter	530-587-0404		
Reno Rendering 1705 N. Wells Ave Reno, NV 89512	800-733-6498	775-323-0791	
Roto-Rooter	530-581-0725		
Rooter Man Plumbing	530-582-1213		
Summit Plumbing Co.	530-544-5514		
Waters Vacuum Service	888-909-7867		775-825-1692

The District provides the above listed companies as a courtesy and does not specifically endorse any of them. Check online listings for a complete list of companies who perform grease interceptor cleaning.

It is your responsibility to determine whether the hauler is qualified and possesses the necessary licensing and perm to perform the work. A copy of the hauler manifest must be retained for our records.

If you have any questions regarding grease interceptor cleaning, grease disposal or any other questions related to our Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG) control program please feel free to contact Phillip Tapia, Construction Inspector II at (530) 580-6046 or by email at ptapia@tcpud.org.