

Clean environment

Preventing pollution and blockages in commercial kitchens

What's going down your drains?

Drains and sewers from commercial kitchens are easily blocked by oil, grease and food. This can cause flooding of the kitchen and of other premises with foul water that cannot drain away. Clearing a blockage and the damage it causes is very expensive – so it is worth avoiding the risk of a blockage building up in the first place.

How is the problem caused?

Grease washed off pans and plates will slowly build up in a sewer, and can eventually block it completely. Oil also causes blockages, as it will solidify in the sewer. Any waste food that is washed down the sink will add to the problem.

Who is responsible?

You are!

If the drain is in a private house or business premises, the owners or residents have to pay for the blockage to be cleared. If the blockage is in a public sewer, then it will be cleared by us.

Clearing a blocked sewer is expensive, as the sewer may have to be dug up and replaced. If a restaurant, take-away or any other business is found to have caused a blockage, we will recover the cost of any clear-up operations from them. The cost can vary from a few hundred pounds to bills of a £1,000 or more.

No-one wants to have to pay to have a sewer cleared. All staff who work in commercial kitchens should understand what they need to do to help avoid blocked drains. If you follow the advice in this guide you will ensure that you don't cause a blockage.

Will a grease trap help?

A grease trap can help protect the drains from oil and grease, however it will only work properly if you make sure of the following:

- The grease trap must be big enough – at least twice the size of the sink that drains through it.
- The trap should be cleared of grease regularly. Depending on usage this might be required once a week or once a month. The grease should be put into a skip, or stored for collection. After clearing, the trap should be refilled with cold water otherwise it will not work properly.

Note: Never flush a grease trap out with boiling water – this forces the trapped grease out, which will cool and solidify further down your drains.

- If you have a dishwasher you should make sure that the waste water from this does not pass through the grease trap. The water in dishwashers is so hot that it melts the grease in a trap, allowing it to escape into the sewer.

Will a grease trap help? – continued

Even with a grease trap in place, you must still make sure that oil is never poured down the sink as traps cannot retain large amounts of oil.

If you think you need a grease trap you can call our Customer Helpline on **0845 601 8855** for advice.

What about macerators?

Food macerators chop up waste food to small sizes which can flow down the drain. However, these increase the food and grease that enter the sewers, and your kitchen is much more likely to cause a blockage. We therefore do **not** recommend food macerators.

Information for kitchen workers

Never get rid of cooking oil by pouring it down the sink or into a drain.

This is the most common way that grease blockages are caused. All the people who work in your kitchen must know about this. When a new person starts to work in the kitchen it must be explained to them how to get rid of oil and grease properly.

Pan washing

When pots and pans are cleaned, even small amounts of oil should not be poured down the sink. Any oil or grease in the pan should first be poured or scraped off into a tin.

Waste oil from food tins

If you use any food that is stored in oil, for example tinned fish, meat or olives, make sure that the oil is not drained into a sink. Instead drain it into a container for storage.

Waste food

Waste food particles and vegetable peelings should be kept away from the drains. You can reduce the amount that escapes down the sink by putting grates over plug holes. Make sure that everyone knows that waste food including rice, vegetable peelings, chip batter and so on should not be washed down the sink but scooped up and put in a dustbin.

Safe disposal of oil and grease

Waste oil and grease should be put in a suitable airtight container and stored hygienically. Never put these out for the normal refuse collection, as they may explode in the vehicles' compression gear. Instead, please call our Customer Helpline on **0845 601 8855** and ask for our Waste Services section. Alternatively, use a Registered Waste Company, who will collect waste oil and grease. Refer to telephone directories or the internet for a company based near you.

How Scottish Water is helping

Scottish Water is committed to tackling the problem caused by waste. We are investing millions of pounds upgrading and building new waste water treatment works and waste water systems to do this.

Preventing Pollution

It is the responsibility of all individuals and companies to ensure that their activities do not harm the environment. The fines for pollution are up to £40,000, and those responsible for pollution can face a massive clean-up bill and possible prosecution. It is, therefore, in all our interests to ensure that pollution does not happen.

Further information

If you need to speak to someone directly or need more information and advice on pollution prevention/trade effluent quality please call our Customer Helpline on **0845 601 8855** and ask to speak to a member of our Trade Effluent Quality team.

Please call our Emergency Helpline on **0845 600 8855** to report an emergency relating to any risk of water pollution to the public water supply or sewer system.

You can write to us at:

Scottish Water
PO Box 8855
Edinburgh
EH10 6YQ

Alternative formats of this guide can be made available free of charge. For information on Braille, large print, audio and variety of languages, please call 0845 606 8855.

We record all calls for quality and training purposes.