

City and County of Honolulu  
Department of Wastewater Management

**ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION BULLETIN**  
**For**  
**Restaurants and Food Processing Industry**

**F.O.G.**

**What is FOG?**

FOG refers to Fats, Oil and Grease found in most kitchens and food service establishments. About 30 percent of the foods we eat contain FOG; these include meats, sauces, gravies, salad dressings, deep-fried dishes, cookies, pastries, cheeses, butter and many others.

Technically speaking, FOG is any solid or viscous substance, including grease which will or may cause obstruction to the flow in a wastewater collection system, or otherwise interfere with the normal operation of the wastewater treatment system.

**Why is FOG a problem?**

FOG is the main cause of most wastewater collection system blockages which often result in spills. These blockages and spills are unsightly, present a potential health hazard and clean-up is difficult, time consuming and costly. When sewer lines become blocked, untreated wastewater may back up onto streets, parking lots and into nearby businesses and residences. If the clog originates on your property, your business is likely to be the first affected.

The City and County of Honolulu maintains several video cameras capable of tracking problems visually within the sewer system, and many sources of the FOG problems can be identified in this way and enforcement action can be initiated to insure compliance with the City and County Pretreatment Program and the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu as amended.

**Why should I care about FOG?**

Someone has to pay for sewer blockage cleanup, and if your business is found responsible, it could be you! According to City and County of Honolulu Revised Ordinance Section 14-1.9 (g) (4) (15), 14-1.9 (h) and 14-11:

*If your food service operation is found to be responsible for a blockage you maybe held liable for any expense, loss or damage created by the discharge. Uncorrected violations may result in termination of sewer service and/or fines.*

*An Industrial User is responsible for the proper operation and maintenance of their grease interceptors, at their own expense, to insure that FOG discharges from their food service operation does not contribute to or result in deposit, obstruction, or damage to sewage collection/treatment system in any way.*

Pretreatment Source Control Specialists routinely inspect meat markets, restaurants, and other food service establishments to ensure compliance with City and County's Pretreatment Program. It is important to have grease interceptors installed by licensed plumbers. For the interceptor to work properly it must be installed correctly and cleaned regularly to maintain efficient

performance. "Under-the-Sink" type grease interceptors require frequent cleaning (often daily) while larger grease interceptors may require a less frequent cleaning schedule. The City and County of Honolulu's Pretreatment Program has developed a policy called the "**25% Rule**" based on grease interceptor manufacturer design/performance standards. These standards indicate that a grease interceptor fails to efficiently remove FOG once the accumulation of floatable FOG material and settled solids total 25% of the total liquid depth of the grease interceptor. In fact, a grease interceptor's performance severely declines once these accumulations exceed 15% of the total liquid depth. Owners/Managers are responsible for making the initial determination of their grease interceptor's cleaning frequency based on the 25% Rule. **As a guideline, owners/managers should conservatively set their cleaning frequency such that FOG and settled solids accumulations do not exceed 20% of the total liquid depth of the grease interceptor.** A Source Control Specialist will make any changes, if required, to the cleaning frequency of the grease interceptor during periodic compliance evaluations.

**How Do You Properly Dispose of FOG?**

It is the responsibility of each business to develop an effective FOG waste management plan and properly dispose of FOG waste on a consistent basis.

Some recommended disposal methods are: recycling, composting, private service contract, and absorbing FOG into solid form for disposal as solid waste.

Because of the wide variety of businesses generating fats, oil and grease, no universal FOG waste management plan can be prescribed, for example large restaurants with capacity to serve 500 at one sitting has different needs and abilities than a small deli or meat market.

**A Few Tips to Get You Started.**

- (1) Identify FOG sources in your business.
- (2) Minimize or eliminate FOG discharges by implementing Best Management Practices for FOG disposal.
- (3) Train Kitchen staff in proper FOG Best Management Practices.
- (4) Post "No Grease" signs as a reminder.
- (5) Evaluate current FOG waste disposal methods.
- (6) Verify that current FOG disposal methods meet local regulations.
- (7) Post a maintenance log in close vicinity to the Grease Interceptor which shows frequency of maintenance and insure it is kept up to date.
- (8) Witness your private service contractor to insure your Grease Interceptor is being properly maintained.

If you have any questions please call Mike Maupin at 523-4951 or Ken Kawahara at 527-5377.