

# Food for thought

Fall 2023

A newsletter for Fairfax County food establishment owners and operators and their employees

## What is FOG?

Many would answer that question as the water droplets, suspended in the atmosphere, but to a food establishment, it stands for...Fats, Oil and Grease! FOG comes from foods such as cooking oil, lard, shortening, meat fats, sauces, gravy, mayonnaise, butter, ice cream and soups... yummy! Wastewater from sinks, dishwashers, hoods, floors and food scraps are also sources of FOG. Grease discharges are predominantly from washing and cleaning operations (washing the grease down the drain), and not from deep frying, as many people may think.

### Why is FOG a problem?

FOG poses a serious threat to the public sanitary sewer and stormwater systems. When not disposed of properly, FOG can form thick clumps of solid deposits along the walls of the sewers, which reduces sewer capacity. These deposits can breakaway and clog sewer lines, causing sewer backups and overflows inside a restaurant or backups through sewer manholes onto private property and the streets. Food service establishments that are found responsible for improper FOG disposal **may be held liable for**

**cleanup and repair costs related to sanitary sewer damage, backups, and overflows.**

### How Should We Properly Dispose of Fats, Oils and Grease?

The most effective way to solve the FOG problem is to keep this material out of the sewer system! Some ways in which to achieve this are to:

- Wipe off dishes, pots, pans, and cooking utensils before washing instead of rinsing down the drain. Do not pour or scrape FOG down any drain.
- Collect waste cooking oils in grease barrels and schedule the pickup of the barrels before they are full. Store grease barrels away from storm sewers. Grease bins should be properly labeled.
- Install a grease trap (typically inside) or grease interceptor (typically outside) to trap the FOG before it enters the county sewer lines. Check the depth of grease and food solids in the trap/ interceptor regularly.
- Grease traps may be cleaned by restaurant staff or a licensed sewage handler. Schedule regular cleaning before the combined grease and solids layers total

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## JOB WELL DONE! Active Managerial Control Awardees Recognized



As the year comes to a close, we would like to congratulate the food service operators who have been recognized with the Active Managerial Control award! During their recent inspections, there were no violations cited and it was observed that good active managerial controls were in place at their establishments.

Congratulations to:

- **Kency Rodrigues and Gloria Bonilla**, Reston Children's Center, 11825 Olde Crafts Dr, Reston, VA
- **Laura Haberkorn**, Engleside Baptist Church, 8428 Highland Ln, Alexandria, VA
- **Nippon Viriya**, Potbelly Sandwich Shop, 1577 Spring Hill Rd, Vienna, VA

See pictures and read details about how they are reducing the risk of foodborne illness in their food establishment on the Health Department website: [www.bit.ly/AMC-Awardees](http://www.bit.ly/AMC-Awardees)

If you have questions on how to be nominated for an active managerial control award, please speak to your area Environmental Health Specialist.



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more than 25% of total capacity. The total capacity is the depth from the bottom of the outlet pipe to the bottom of the tank. (A sign that alerts management to increase cleaning frequency of the grease trap is ODOR!)

- Clean up any spills or leaks immediately using dry methods. Food grade paper, paper towels or newspaper should be used to wipe up grease. Care should also be taken to avoid washing grease into a storm drain.
- Keep a record of the regular grease trap cleaning. The Health Department or the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services may ask to see these records during routine inspections.

Learn more about Fairfax County's discharge policies for FSE and FOG at: [www.bit.ly/industrial-waste-discharge](http://www.bit.ly/industrial-waste-discharge) ■

## Imminent health hazards — Ceasing operations and reporting

An imminent health hazard can be defined as an event or situation that requires immediate correction to prevent injury or harm to the public. An imminent health hazard may exist because of an emergency such as fire, flood, extended interruption of electrical or water service, SEWAGE back up, misuse of poisonous OR TOXIC MATERIALS, onset of an apparent foodborne illness outbreak, gross unsanitary occurrence or condition, or other circumstances that may endanger public health, without implying intent. These health hazards can be intentional or unintentional. Many people are unaware of the significant impact that an imminent health hazard may pose to the public, and therefore may not know how to respond. Fairfax County Food Code, Chapter 43.2, requires that if an IMMEDIATE HEALTH HAZARD exists, a PERMIT HOLDER shall immediately discontinue operations and notify the REGULATORY AUTHORITY.

After a closure (voluntary or otherwise), the establishment will need to notify the Health Department and obtain approval before re-opening the food establishment and resuming operations. If you have any questions about permit suspensions, you may call 703-246-2201, or contact your area Environmental Health Specialist. ■

## Harborage for the Holidays!

As we cozy up in the cooler months, with visions of sugar plums dancing in our heads, it is important to remember the “unwanted” guests that may arrive around the holidays... pests! Food establishments can be breeding grounds for nuisances such as rodents and insects. It is important to implement cleaning practices for the interior of a food establishment, without neglecting the maintenance of the exterior premises. Unkempt garbage cans can provide shelter, warmth and food for more than just “reindeer.” Pests are not only an annoyance, but also pose a threat to public health due to their ability to carry or pass germs that can make us sick. Food establishment managers and owners should work closely with neighboring facilities, service companies and cleaning crews to make sure that these areas are properly maintained and include: ground debris elimination, closed lids, repaired openings, and adequate removal frequency. The holidays are more fun when they are pest-free! For questions or concerns, contact your area Environmental Health Specialist. ■

## Food Safety Knowledge Check!

We all love food, but how much do you know about food safety? Click on the link and test your knowledge with this fun quiz: [www.bit.ly/49PtLeY](http://www.bit.ly/49PtLeY)

## FYI — Food Establishment Inspection Reports Available Online

In case you were unaware – retail food establishment inspection reports can now be viewed online, and they will be available approximately two weeks after a Health Department inspection. These reports are for food facilities in Fairfax County, City of Fairfax, City of Falls Church and the Towns of Herndon, Vienna, and Clifton. See the inspection reports here: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/food/inspection-reports](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/food/inspection-reports)



Reggie and Cody invite you to check out the food inspection reports!

[www.bit.ly/3YakPvx](http://www.bit.ly/3YakPvx)