

# Disposal of Fats, Oils and Food Waste

Best Management Practice for Catering Outlets



Working in partnership with:



**STOP & THINK**  
**NOT**  
**IN THE**  
**SINK**



**Fat, oil & grease block sewers.**

# Fat, oil and grease in drains and sewers

The purpose of this document is to advise food establishments on the need to keep fat, oil and grease out of drains and sewers.

## Environmental impact

Fat, oil and grease cause major problems to drains and sewers. When they are disposed of down kitchen sinks or drains they cause blockages; when they enter rainwater pipes or gullies they cause pollution in streams and rivers.

## This document covers:

- History
- Housekeeping
- Legal requirements

## History of the problem

The eating habits of the nation are changing, people are eating out much more frequently than they did in the past and the number of food outlets is increasing.

Fat, oil and grease in liquid form may not appear to be harmful, but as it cools it congeals and hardens. It sticks to the inner lining of drainage pipes and restricts the wastewater flow causing the pipes to block. Using detergents or bleach may appear to help but this is only temporary as the mixture soon turns back to thick or solid fat. The number of blockages and pollution incidents relating to fat, oil and grease are

also increasing. There are approximately 25,000 sewer blockages in Northern Ireland every year of which up to 60% are caused by fat, oil and grease. Clearing these blockages costs millions of pounds a year which is money that could be spent improving services to the local community. Businesses also risk blocking their own drainage systems, which results in extra costs being incurred in clean-up efforts. These fat blockages can result in sewer flooding, odour problems and the risk of rat infestations, both near and beyond your premises. In fact, every outlet disposing of fat, oil and grease into sinks and drains is at risk of experiencing damaging and costly drainage problems but there are ways that you can help.



Fat building up in a manhole

# House-keeping

## Stop and think - not down the sink

The purpose of this document is to advise food establishments on the need to keep fat, oil and grease out of drains and sewers.

### Training

Training for all staff should include instruction on why it is important to keep fats, oils, grease and food waste out of drains and sewers. It should be explained to each member of staff that failure to do this can lead to expensive costs for the business to unblock drains and clean up the area. Bad practice can result in a public health nuisance, potential prosecution and unwanted negative publicity as well as disruption to normal business.

### Preparation prior to washing

Plates, pots, trays and utensils should be scraped and dry wiped with a disposable kitchen towel prior to putting them in the sink or dishwasher and the scrapings placed in the bin. All sinks should have a strainer for placing in the plug hole to prevent waste food from going down the drain. Waste food collected in the strainer should be placed in the rubbish bin ready for collection.



All food should be scraped into a rubbish bin or food processor and dishes dry wiped prior to putting them in the sink or dishwasher.

Dry wipe pots and utensils prior to washing



# House-keeping

## Removal of fat, oil and grease

### Grease traps/grease interceptors

Grease traps are specially designed units which are placed in drain pipes to separate the fat, oil and grease from the rest of the wastewater. The wastewater then continues to flow to the sewage works for treatment while the grease is retained in the trap to be collected by a licensed waste oil collector at regular intervals. These units can be highly effective if they are correctly installed, serviced and maintained. A written record of maintenance must be kept.

### Food macerators

These appliances are designed to chop and grind food into small pieces prior to disposal into the drainage system. However, fat combines again in the pipes resulting in the need for expensive blockage clearance. Drains and sewers should not be used for the disposal of food and these units encourage bad practice. Our advice is not to install them. Waste food should be placed in the bin and collected by a commercial waste contractor.

### Enzyme dosing systems

Special enzymes are used to break down fats, oils and greases in the drainage system. They are supplied by specialist companies and can be used with grease traps. Enzymes can be effective where properly used, but keeping fat, oil and grease out of drains in the first place should make them unnecessary.



Dry wipe pots and utensils prior to washing



Poor storage of waste cooking oil



Pour waste oil into an empty drum for collection

### Waste oil storage

Waste oil comes from sources such as deep fat fryers, woks, frying pans and baking trays. Waste oil and fat should be collected in an air-tight container to prevent odours and rats. The container should be stored in a secure area, clear of all drains, to prevent spills and leakages.

### Recycled waste cooking oil

The collected waste oil will either be used for bio-diesel for transport fuel or for incineration for the generation of electricity. The government supports recycling of waste cooking oil as it reduces the dependency on landfill sites and the use of fossil fuels for energy generation. NI Water supports recycling as it ensures that waste oil stays out of the drainage system.

# Sewers are for sewage

Put all other waste in its proper place

## Waste oil collection

In the past, food outlets were often paid for their waste oil, which could then be used as a high energy diet for livestock. However, due to a change in legislation, this route is now closed and the oil has to be collected commercially for disposal or recycling.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) licenses waste oil collectors and they can provide a list of those operating in your area. You must ensure your waste contractor is a NIEA licensed waste carrier and that they give you a copy of the waste transfer note.

You should also check that the waste is being taken to a licensed waste management site. Waste transfer notes should be kept for two years and made available for inspection under Section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

These simple steps will not only help reduce blockages, but will also help eliminate costs, negative publicity and prosecution that flooding would bring to your business. They could even reduce water usage, helping to preserve supplies and lower your bills.



Fat beginning to block a sewer

# Stop & Think Not down the sink

Checklist for managing fat, oil and grease in your kitchen.

## Do



Do wipe and scrape plates, pans and utensils before washing and dispose into the appropriate waste bin.



Do collect waste oil in a suitable container.



Do use strainers in sink plug holes and empty contents into appropriate bin.



Do arrange for oil to be collected by a licensed waste contractor.



Do maintain grease traps & enzyme dosing equipment.

## Do not



Do not put food scrapings into the sink.



Do not put cooking oil, fat or grease down the sink.



Do not pour boiling hot water down the sink to try and dissolve the fat and grease. It does not work!



Do not pour waste oil, fat or grease down the drain.



Do not sweep waste into floor drains. Place in the appropriate bin.

# Legal requirements

There are a number of legal requirements in place to help prevent fat, oil and grease entering drains and sewers. Failure to adhere to these can lead to enforcement and prosecution.

## Food Waste Regulations

(Northern Ireland) 2015

The Food Waste Regulations require the separate collection of non-domestic food waste. From 1 April 2016, this applies to food businesses producing more than 50kg of food waste per week and from 1 April 2017 it will apply to food businesses producing more than 5kg of food waste per week. From 1 April 2017, there will also be a ban on the non-domestic disposal of food waste to drains and sewers.

## Water and Sewerage Services

(Northern Ireland) Order 2006

Under Article 168 Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 it is an offence to empty or to allow to be emptied, into any drain connecting to a public sewer, any matter which is likely to interfere with the free flow of its contents. Under Article 236, if fat, oil and grease from your premises enter the public sewer and contribute to a blockage we may seek to recover our clearance costs from those responsible.

## Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (NI) 2011

The law relating to statutory nuisance is contained within Part 7 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (NI) 2011. This describes categories of nuisance and includes any accumulation or deposit and any watercourse or drain which is prejudicial to health or a nuisance. If the local Council is satisfied that a statutory nuisance exists or is likely to occur or recur, it must serve an abatement notice. This notice may be served on the person responsible for the nuisance or, in certain circumstances, on the owner/occupier of the premises. Failure to comply may result in prosecution and the issue of a court fine including a daily fine for each day the offence continues. The Council has powers to carry out works in default and recover their costs.

## **Pollution Control and Local Government**

(Northern Ireland) Order 1978

Article 65 of the Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 contains provision for defective premises. These provisions are applicable where it appears to the local authority that premises are in such a state as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance and where there would be unreasonable delay if the provisions of Part 7 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 were to be used. The provisions allow the local authority to abate the nuisance and recharge their costs.

## **Animal By-Products Regulations**

(Northern Ireland) 2003

From 1 November 2004 waste cooking oil from catering premises can no longer be used as an ingredient in animal feed. This is to safeguard the food chain. The collection of waste cooking oil must be via a licensed waste carrier. From October 2007 liquid waste may not be disposed of at landfill.

## **Food Hygiene Regulations**

(Northern Ireland) 2006

Local authorities are authorised to inspect premises under the Food Hygiene Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. Problems arising from the effect of fat, oil and grease on drains, resulting in a failure to comply with the Food Hygiene Regulations, could result in prosecution or an emergency prohibition order preventing trading from the premises.

## **Waste and Contaminated Land**

(Northern Ireland) Order 1997

The legislation refers to disposal of waste and governs the disposal of fats, oils and grease which are to be collected in a suitable container and disposed of by a licensed waster contractor.

Note where reference is made to Acts of Parliament and Regulations, it should be noted that subsequent amendments or replacements equally apply.

