

FACT SHEET

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Proposed Fats, Oils & Grease (FOG) Control Ordinance

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

We have a big grease problem. Used cooking oils (also referred to as fats, oils and grease or “FOG”), are clogging San Francisco’s sewers and costing us all a lot of money—over \$3.5 million each year to respond to grease clogged pipes. When poured down drains, cooking oil will harden and build up inside of drain pipes and sewer pipes, constricting water flow the way cholesterol affects blood flow in arteries.

WHY A FOG CONTROL ORDINANCE?

San Francisco law already requires that restaurants and other Food Service Establishments (FSEs) comply with limits for the amount of total oil and grease that can be discharged into City sewers. The discharge limit alone, however, is clearly not working to keep FOG out of the sewers. Many FSEs have grease capturing equipment, but it is not well maintained or serviced so it does little to remove grease from the wastewater discharged into the sewer system. Some have no grease capturing equipment installed at all.

WHAT WILL THE ORDINANCE DO?

The FOG Control Ordinance will:

- » give local FSEs clear requirements on exactly what type of grease capturing equipment they have to install (based on cooking equipment, plumbing fixtures, and other factors which correlate to a FSEs FOG-discharge risk);
- » result in standards and inspections to ensure that any type of grease capturing equipment is well maintained and serviced (so it will remove grease from wastewater discharges as intended);
- » establish other minor prohibitions and requirements that will protect the sewer system from FOG and ensure that grease capturing equipment is properly functioning; and
- » increase opportunities for recycling of waste grease, with the potential to convert it to biofuel

GREASE CAPTURING EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Existing Food Service Establishments four categories of dischargers:

Category 4 FOG Dischargers: Only reheat or hot-hold prepared foods.

- No change from current City requirements.
- No grease capturing equipment required.

Category 3 FOG Dischargers: FSEs with food preparation activities that generate FOG, but risk of FOG discharge to sewer is low (based on factors such as cooking equipment and plumbing fixtures).

- No change from current City requirements;
- Pursuant to the City Plumbing Code, must install approved grease capturing equipment.¹

Category 2 FOG Dischargers: FOG discharge risk to sewer is not low and FSE does have approved grease capturing equipment in place to capture discharges containing FOG:

- Existing equipment must have been properly sized/installed; must capture all grease waste discharge lines; must be fully operational; and must be properly maintained/serviced.

Category 1 FOG Dischargers: FOG discharge risk to sewer is not low and FSE does not have approved grease capturing equipment in place.

- Must install authorized Grease Removal Device or Gravity Grease Interceptor within 60 days.



The sewer lateral, connected to a restaurant in San Francisco, is clogged by FOG.

¹ Approved grease capturing equipment in the San Francisco Plumbing Code includes Hydromechanical Grease Interceptors (HGIs), Gravity Grease Interceptors (GGIs), and Grease Removal Devices (GRDs). Plumbing permits must be filed before installing any such equipment (as well as electrical or building permits, where applicable).

OTHER ORDINANCE REQUIREMENTS

General Requirements: Proper operation, maintenance and servicing of all grease capturing equipment; Proper storage and recycling (or disposal) of FOG; Installation of small mesh food strainers in kitchen drains; Implementation of FOG control practices (such as dry-wiping plates); FSEs shall apply for wastewater discharge permits or other authorizations if required by the SFPUC.

Prohibitions: The ordinance will prohibit:

- Disposal of FOG or any food waste containing FOG directly into drains leading to the sewer system, except in accordance with the ordinance, the San Francisco Plumbing Code and the SFPUC's rules and regulations.
- Installation of garbage grinders in new FSEs; garbage grinders in existing FSEs shall be removed or rendered permanently inoperative.
- Discharge of wastewater with temperature higher than 140°F to or through grease capturing equipment.
- Discharge of wastewater from dishwashers to or through grease capturing equipment.
- Having water closets, urinals, and other plumbing fixtures conveying human waste drain into or through any grease capturing equipment.
- The discharge of solvents or additives that emulsify grease into drainage pipes leading to grease capturing equipment is prohibited.
- The use of biological additives, including, but not limited to enzymes, into drainage pipes leading to grease capturing equipment is prohibited.

Special Situations:

- A FSE, regardless of the FOG Discharger Category initially assigned to it, if found to be causing or contributing to grease accumulation problems in sewer laterals or sewer mains will be required to install a Grease Removal Device or Gravity Grease Interceptor within 60 days.
- New FSE construction, or existing FSE changes in ownership or remodeling, will trigger assessment of the FSE FOG Discharger category and installation of an applicable grease capturing equipment.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO BUSINESSES

- Less offensive equipment maintenance;
- Reduced odors, pests and health hazards;
- Reduced risk of fines due to non-compliance with wastewater discharge limits for oil and grease or plumbing code violations; and
- Reduced likelihood of expensive cleanups and plumbing repairs.

HOW DO GREASE REMOVAL DEVICES (GRDS) COMPARE TO OTHER EQUIPMENT?

- Grease Removal Devices automatically, mechanically remove waste grease (and food solids) from wastewater discharges.
- If operated properly, GRDs are less offensive to maintain and clean because waste grease does not accumulate in the equipment; therefore, they are also more likely to be properly maintained and serviced and remain effective in removing FOG.
- Waste grease recovered from a GRD is higher quality and can be recycled into biofuel; food solids recovered can be composted. Grease collection from GRDs can lower waste grease pumping and hauling cost, as compared to Gravity Grease Interceptors (GGI) and Hydromechanical Grease Interceptors (HGI), which accumulate waste grease, water, and solids that must be pumped out.
- Gravity Grease Interceptors (GGI) are effective, but large (> 300 gallons) and generally installed outside/underground; therefore few San Francisco FSEs will have this option.

SFPUC WILL HELP OFFSET COSTS

Initial one-time costs to purchase and install a GRD are greater than the more common HGIs, but annual operational and maintenance costs are typically less. Therefore, the initial investment will pay for itself over time. Additionally, the SFPUC anticipates being able to offer the following financial incentives to minimize the up-front cost to FSEs and speed up the return on investment for businesses:

Cost Savings on Sewer Service Charges:

- FSEs verified as having properly sized, installed and fully operational GRDs or GGIs, should be eligible for a reduction to their sewer service charges (currently estimated at between 12-14%).
- This adjustment would account for the expected improved performance of the equipment and thus the anticipated reduced loadings of oil and grease into the sewer system.
- To qualify, the FSE must have its own water/sewer account and, thus, have been paying the sewer loading charges assigned to food service establishments for oil and grease.

Grants:

- A limited-time \$500 grant program.

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
1155 Market Street, 11th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103

www.sfsewers.org

