



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding FOG



What is FOG and why do we have a FOG Ordinance?

FOG refers to fats, oils, and grease that are generated from normal business operations of food service establishments (FSE's). FOG is commonly washed into the plumbing system during clean-up through the kitchen sink. As it cools, it congeals and decreases pipe capacity both inside the FSE and in the city sanitary sewer system. FOG can block your drain, your neighbors drain, the main collection lines, and potentially becoming an environmental and public health risk.

The primary goal of the FOG Ordinance is to eliminate FOG-related sanitary sewer overflows. Compliance Technicians will routinely do inspections of kitchens and FSE's to ensure compliance with regulations set forth by the Sioux City Municipal Code. It is up to each FSE to develop a FOG waste management plan that best fits your establishment and properly disposes of the FOG waste on a consistent basis.

Is my Business a Food Service Establishment (FSE)?

The FOG Ordinance defines an FSE as "any building, vehicle, place, or structure, or any room or division in a building, vehicle, place, or structure where food is prepared, served, or sold for immediate consumption on or in the vicinity of the premises; called for, taken out, or consumed on property by customers, or prepared prior to being delivered to another location for consumption." This includes, but is not limited to, restaurants, bars, schools, daycares, churches, nursing homes, bakeries, grocery stores, caterers, food/meat processors and other food preparation operations."

How often does my grease interceptor or grease trap need to be maintained?

City Code requires the 25% rule be met. The 25% rule applies to both grease interceptors and grease traps; which states the FOG (floats to the top) and solids (settles to the bottom) content of the device should not exceed 25% of the grease interceptor/trap depth. The FOG Ordinance states that a grease trap must be cleaned out a minimum of one time per week or when the 25% rule is reached, whichever comes first. The Ordinance also says that any grease interceptor must be cleaned out a minimum of one time every quarter (3 months) or when the 25% rule is reached, whichever comes first. Internal grease traps may be cleaned out by the FSE as long as they are disposing of the contents properly and tracking the cleaning frequency. All external grease interceptors must be cleaned out by one of our certified haulers.

The grease trap/interceptor design allows the wastewater enough time inside the device to effectively remove FOG and solids from the wastewater before it reaches the sanitary sewer collection system. The single most important thing you can do to help extend the length of time between maintenance and save the facility money for maintenance expenses is to use diligence in dry wiping prior to washing. Scrape food debris in the garbage and dry wipe the dishes prior to immersion in warm water (sink or dishwasher).

Will my existing grease trap (indoor, under the sink unit) be sufficient to comply with the FOG Ordinance?

A grease trap that is properly sized and installed to remove the FOG at your FSE is important. Following the suggested best management practices (BMPs) and routine maintenance of the trap will increase the probability of meeting the discharge limits of the FOG Ordinance. Indoor grease traps are much smaller in design and therefore need more maintenance to prevent the FOG from reaching the sanitary sewers. Ensure baffles and deflector shields are installed properly. If the trap is not cleaned frequently or correctly it will not perform well and could put your FSE at risk of violating FOG discharge limits.

May I use chemicals, enzymes or bacteria in my grease removal device or in my drains?

The FOG Ordinance prohibits the use of enzymes, emulsifying chemicals, hot water above 140°F, or other agents as a grease abatement method to grease removal devices or drains. These chemicals keep the FOG emulsified long enough to cause serious problems downstream. Downstream, these chemicals allow for the FOG to congeal and decrease pipe capacity, having the potential to cause a serious blockage and sanitary sewer overflow. You may contact the Sioux City FOG Program regarding products that have been approved or visit our website at sioux-city.org/FOG.

What are the most important things for me, the FSE owner or operator, to know about the FOG Ordinance?

The Wastewater Treatment Plant staff will perform routine compliance inspection. The important items the WWTP will check are:

1. The grease removal device (interior grease trap or exterior grease interceptor) is under 25% full of FOG and solids. This will be done via physical inspection by the Compliance Technician with the use of a sludge judge.
2. Maintenance records, including accurate records by the certified grease hauler, are on-site and available at the request of the inspector. Records must be kept for a period of 3 years.
3. Any additional requirements from the official inspection report.

What enforcement action(s) could potentially occur if the regulations of the FOG Ordinance are not met by the FSE?

Enforcement actions could include, but are not limited to, notice of violation without a fine; notice of violation with fines of \$100 up to \$1000/per day, per violation; civil penalties; submission of a compliance plan; installation of a properly sized grease control mechanism; and clean-up costs for blockages and sanitary sewer overflows.

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