

Fact Sheet



Commercial Kitchen Emergencies – 4 Ways to Fight Kitchen Fires. A Guide for Commercial Kitchen and Restaurant Owners and Managers.

4 Ways to Fight Kitchen Fires

Restaurant staffs need training in how to prevent and react to an outbreak.

May 3, 2016

Carla Williams

Kitchen fires should be a major concern for any restaurant owner or manager. Although a significant number of kitchen fires are put out as soon as they start, some spread into a much bigger problem.



Kitchen fires have the ability to destroy not only the property, but the business.

Even if you do everything right, a fire can still erupt in a restaurant kitchen. *Thinkstock*

Fire safety training can prepare a staff to know what to do if a fire starts and how to stop it before it spreads. Employees who understand how to prevent and put out grease fires as well as troubleshoot an automatic suppression system

failure are less likely to encounter a serious fire. If your staff understands how to deal with every class of kitchen fire, they will be more prepared to handle a fire should one occur.

At a minimum, any restaurant staff should understand these four key points of fire safety:

1. Why a clean kitchen is a safer kitchen

The first thing employees should learn is the importance of keeping a clean kitchen. Keeping the kitchen clean is not only a food safety issue, it is also a fire safety issue. Between 2006 and 2010, the National Fire Protection Association found that insufficient cleaning led to 21 percent of all kitchen fires. Grease, not surprisingly, causes the majority of kitchen fires.

Grease is highly flammable and can collect on a lot of kitchen surfaces and appliances. Grease can also build up in exhaust ducts or appliance hoods and can easily ignite with a spark or an open flame. It may start as small fire, but it can turn into a very big fire in a short time. It is important for your staff to

understand how dangerous grease buildup is so they can maintain the cleanliness of all appliances and surfaces to keep them clean and safe.

2. What to do when an automatic suppression system fails

Managers also need to provide training on what to do when an automatic suppression system fails. Automatic fire suppression systems are absolutely necessary in any commercial kitchen and [required by OSHA](#). They help save lives by decreasing the severity of a fire in its early stages. Examples of automatic systems include fire sprinklers, gaseous fire suppression and condensed aerosol fire suppression.

Unfortunately, you cannot rely on your automatic suppression system alone when a fire occurs. These systems can fail due to grease clogs, incorrectly positioned nozzles or the spread of fire to an out-of-reach area.

A kitchen fire safety plan must include freestanding fire extinguishers and the training needed to use them properly. To avoid putting employees in danger, fire extinguishers should be located throughout the workplace and readily accessible in the event of a fire. All staff should be trained to operate the specific fire extinguishers in your kitchen and which ones they need to put out different classes of fires.

3. The different classes of fires and extinguishers

Not all fires are the same; neither are the extinguishers used to put them out. It's important for all your employees to receive education on different fire classes, how each one starts and how to extinguish them.

Most kitchen fires are Class K, fueled by vegetable or animal oils and fats. They are among the most dangerous because they have a high flashpoint, which causes the fire to burn extremely hot. All Class K fires need to be fought with a [wet chemical suppression system](#) or a fire



extinguisher made to put out grease fires. It's important that the fire extinguisher not be more than 30 feet from areas with a Class K fire potential.

4. A comprehensive emergency plan

Sometimes, no matter how careful everyone is, a restaurant kitchen fire happens anyway. The best you can do is to have your staff prepared and informed. If the situation calls for you and your employees to control a fire that is spreading, everyone should know how to shut off the electricity and gas, where fire extinguishers are located and how to manually turn on the fire suppression system.

All employees also need to know how to evacuate the building and where all exits are located. It is important for everyone to know how to call the fire department and where each fire alarm is. Because even a small fire can leave employees injured, anyone who works around a heat source in your kitchen should know how to administer first aid for burns.

Fires are a serious matter, so it is worth whatever time and effort it takes to inform your staff about fire safety and prevention. Not only will it reduce the risk of fire in your restaurant kitchen, it will keep everyone more alert, safe and ready to take action if a fire occurs.

Carla Williams manages customer and media relations for the [Strike First Corporation of America](#).