

How to avoid a fire hazard



Nigel Walton, Director at Abbot Fire Group, explains how you can minimise the risk of fire within your commercial kitchen

As you might expect, the best way to avoid fire hazards within the commercial kitchen is to ensure good housekeeping practises and procedures.

This starts with ensuring all extract canopy filters and extract ducts are regularly cleaned and free from grease build up. All cooking appliances need to be cleaned and serviced regularly according to their manufacturer's recommendations. This ensures all cooking appliances from deep fat fryers to ovens and pressure cookers are in correct working order and helps to minimise the risk of failure, and therefore potential fire risk.

It is particularly important on deep fat fryers that the thermostat is in correct working order; if the thermostat is broken, or not functioning properly, then the hot oil within the fryer can reach auto-ignition point and burst spontaneously into flames. This can happen without notice, and is an immediate danger for any staff member attending the deep fat fryer's contents.

There are other hazards within the kitchen than can pose a fire risk too; these include overloading plug sockets, frayed electrical cables, short circuits on extractor fans, or clothing and tea towels catching fire on naked flames. Being aware of these hazards and identifying processes and procedures to avoid them is crucial.

Commercial kitchens legally require a risk assessment to be undertaken. This highlights the risk of fire within the kitchen and identifies steps to be taken to help reduce that risk.

As a result of your fire risk assessment portable fire extinguishers are also likely to be found in the kitchen, with the content of the extinguisher based on the

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fire risk. Therefore you are likely to be familiar with wet chemical (yellow label) extinguishers within the commercial kitchen environment, as these can be used on fat and hot oil fires.

It's all well and good having extinguishers placed within the workplace, but ensuring staff are aware of fire risks and how to use extinguishers to tackle a small fire is also important. Fire safety training for employees is a legal requirement, and this training covers how to spot fire risks and reduce them, and can include a practical session on using a fire extinguisher to extinguish a fire in carefully controlled conditions. Fire extinguishers are not to be used to hold doors open; they should be in their designated place permanently, enabling them to be accessed quickly if needed. Other suitable devices are available for holding fire doors open safely.

Should a fire break out within your commercial kitchen, it's important that the fire alarm is sounded before anyone attempts to tackle the fire. If you discover a fire, press the break glass point which



Servicing of the Ansul suppression system is vital in helping to avoid a fire

will automatically sound the fire alarm, and only tackle a small fire if it is safe to do so, always ensuring the exit is behind you.

Kitchen fire suppression systems will work automatically should a fire break out, but also have a manual pull station, enabling kitchen staff to act quickly in the event of a fire by pulling the handle to operate the system. The chemicals in the Ansul R-102 kitchen fire suppression system not only smother and extinguish a fire, but are equipment friendly, ensuring quick clean up after a fire, and avoiding prolonged periods of closure. Regular servicing of your kitchen fire suppression system is important too, to ensure it can be relied upon should a fire break out.

Therefore a few simple steps will help keep your staff and business safe from the risk of fire. Ensure all equipment is clean and fit for purpose; conduct a fire risk assessment; have the correct

fire protection system in place for your fire risk, and have these items serviced regularly; and ensure staff know what to do in the event of a fire.

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Abbot Fire Group is the first, and currently only, company in the UK approved by the LPCB to install and service kitchen suppression systems.



Extinguishers should be placed in easy to reach places



Keeping your commercial kitchen safe

Just one call for all your fire protection products and servicing needs including:

- Ansul R-102 kitchen suppression systems – designed to your specific requirements, installed and regularly serviced
- Fire extinguishers – supply, installation and on-going servicing agreements

Industry approved Abbot Fire Group also provides fire risk assessments, fire safety training, and fixed electrical testing.

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