



CHARLESTON FIRE DEPARTMENT



Fire Marshal Division

Information Bulletin

Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Hood Inspection & Cleaning

The exhaust system is an integral part of ensuring the safety for all commercial cooking operations. The exhaust system is intended to remove grease laden vapors, steam, heated air, and other products of combustion to a safe location outdoors. In order for the exhaust system to operate properly, and to ensure the fire suppression system has the ability to function as designed, the exhaust system must be routinely inspected, cleaned, serviced, and maintained by qualified vendors.

Qualified

The International Fire Code requires individuals inspecting and subsequently cleaning commercial kitchen hoods to be qualified to conduct the work. Vendors or individuals who inspect or clean these types of systems must submit the appropriate application and supporting documentation to the Charleston Fire Marshal Division for review and processing. Properly qualified vendors or individuals will be deemed qualified for a period of up to one year.

Responsibility

Owners, landlords, and tenants are responsible for ensuring routine maintenance, service, and cleaning of the exhaust system has been performed to ensure proper working order and that you are in compliance with the code. The responsibility to maintain these systems is typically inherited by the tenant unless the responsibility is specifically assumed by another party through a contract, lease, or other agreement.

Owners and operators of businesses engaging in commercial cooking operations must:

- Utilize a vendor or individual who has been deemed as qualified to work in the City of Charleston. A list of approved contractors will be published on our website and the contractor will be issued verification documentation.
- Ensure inspection and cleaning frequencies are achieved.
- Coordinate appropriate inspection intervals with their vendor and provide necessary access to safely complete the work.
- Maintain three years of inspection records on site.

Qualified vendors or individuals must:

- Demonstrate adequate training, experience, and knowledge to be deemed qualified.
- Possess a current City of Charleston business license and maintain insurance.
- Take photos documenting all hood conditions before, during, and after cleaning operations.
- Deliver reports to the facility where work is being conducted.
- Maintain records of inspection for three years and will deliver said records when requested.
- Required to report deficiencies in an exhaust system to the Fire Marshal Division.
- If a contract is terminated, the contractor is required to report to the Fire Marshal Division.
- Maintain qualifications by complying with the ongoing program.

Frequency

The International Fire Code provides the minimum expectations for the inspection of commercial kitchen hoods to determine if cleaning is necessary. The inspection and cleaning must be conducted by qualified individuals. Please see page 2 of this document for the cleaning frequency.

The 2021 edition of the International Fire Code (IFC) was adopted throughout the State of South Carolina on January 1st, 2023. This edition of the code has the minimum expectations for inspection and cleaning of commercial kitchen hoods. The information contained below is provided from the 2021 IFC and will be considered the minimum acceptable routine for commercial kitchen exhaust system cleaning:

606.3.3 Cleaning. Hoods, grease-removal devices, fans, ducts and other appurtenances shall be cleaned at intervals as required by Sections 606.3.3.1 through 606.3.3.3

606.3.3.1 Inspection. Hoods, grease-removal devices, fans, ducts and other appurtenances shall be inspected at intervals specific in Table 606.3.3.1 or as approved by the fire code official. Inspection shall be completed by qualified individuals.

Table 606.3.3.1
Commercial Cooking System Inspection Frequency

Type of Cooking Operation	Frequency of Inspection
High-volume cooking operations such as 24-hour cooking, charbroiling or wok cooking	3 months
Low-volume cooking operations such as places of religious worship, seasonal businesses and senior centers	12 months
Cooking operations utilizing solid fuel-burning cooking appliances	1 month
All other cooking operations	6 months

606.3.3.2 Grease accumulation. If during the inspection it is found that hoods, grease-removal devices, fans, ducts or other appurtenances have an accumulation of grease, such components shall be cleaned in accordance with ANSI/ IKECA C10.

606.3.3.3 Records. Records for inspections shall state the individual and company performing the inspection, a description of the inspection and when the inspection took place. Records for cleanings shall state the individual and company performing the cleaning and when the cleaning took place. Such records shall be completed after each inspection or cleaning and be maintained.