

# Fat, Oils and Grease Traps



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## What is FOG?

The main culprit of sewer blockages is fats, oils and grease (known as FOG) that is simply poured down a kitchen sink or a drain. In liquid form fat, oil and grease do not appear to be harmful, but when it cools in the sewer network it congeals and hardens. Over time it sticks to the inner lining of drainage pipes and restricts the waste water flow causing the pipes to block. Clearing these blocked sewers is an expensive and time consuming exercise.

FOG blockages often result in sewer flooding, odour problems, pest infestation and unhygienic conditions which may cause disease. FOG not only disrupts municipal sewer lines, it also has the potential to disrupt effective organic decomposing processes in waste water treatment plants.

In terms of the General Health Regulations and Bylaws relating to Restaurants and Cafés (P.N. 88 of 1983) it is compulsory for all restaurant and café keepers to provide and maintain a grease trap at the point where the sink waste pipe discharges into the gully and drains. Any person who contravenes or fails to comply with any provision of this by-law, may be fined.

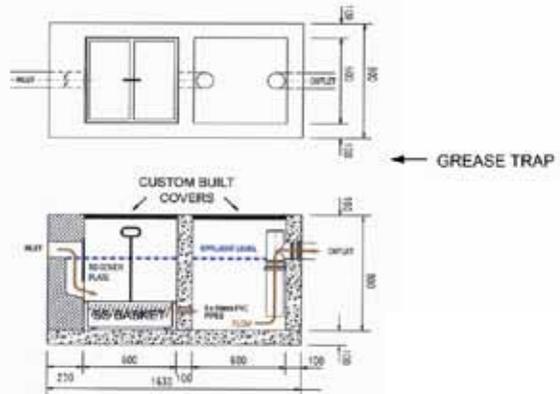
## What are FOG Traps?

To address FOG related blockages, the Municipality adopted a regulatory FOG management programme.

In terms of this programme regular inspections will be carried out by municipal officials at all restaurants, take-aways, factories and other producers of FOG, to ensure that these businesses comply with all statutory requirements relating to wastewater quality and the technical installation of FOG traps.

Grease or FOG traps are specially designed units which are placed in drain pipes to separate the fat, oil and grease from the rest of the waste water. The wastewater then continues to flow to the sewage works for treatment while the grease is retained in the trap to be removed.

These units can be highly effective if they are correctly installed, serviced and maintained as depicted below.



## Controlling FOG

FOG systems should be cleaned on a regular basis, at least twice a week and the fat, oil and grease that is removed from the system should preferably be stored in **air-tight plastic containers** with a maximum capacity of 30 litres, when full, to make the handling thereof effortless. The container should be stored in a secure area, clear of all drains, to prevent spills and leakages.

Not only does this help to avoid odours and rats, it also reduces the incidents of FOG related blockages in the sewer network, and ensures that fats and oils are disposed of using correct and environmentally friendly methods.

## What can businesses do?

Businesses are advised to train their staff on the importance of keeping fats, oils, grease and food waste out of drains and sewers. Similarly, all sinks or FOG systems should have a **strainer or a sieve** to prevent waste food from going down the drain. These simple steps will not only help reduce blockages, but will also eliminate costs, negative publicity and prosecution that flooding would bring to your business. They could even reduce water usage, helping to preserve supplies and lower overhead costs.

A FOG separation device is a chamber system, designed for waste water to pass through and allow emulsified oil to float to the top for the retention while the remainder of the effluent passes through.

The separation device must be designed to satisfy five basic criteria in order to ensure effective separation.

- ✓ Retention time to allow grease and fat to float to the surface of the chamber,
- ✓ Adequate volume to allow waste water to cool sufficiently for emulsified grease to separate,
- ✓ Turbulence through the device must be controlled to prevent suspension of grease in the waste water,
- ✓ Provide sufficient storage capacity for accumulated grease and solids between cleanings,
- ✓ Design criteria must be based on accepted engineering principles and be approved by authorized officials of the municipality. These vary from application to application.

When cleaning the device, the grease and solids removed from the device should be placed in an approved container for removal to the waste disposal site.

Details on collection and removal options will be provided on request.

### Helpful tips for homes

Home owners can help prevent costly and unsanitary overflows by following a few simple steps:

- ✓ Do not pour grease, fats, and oils from cooking down the drain.
- ✓ Scrape excess grease/fat in a container or bag and dispose of it in the garbage prior to washing.
- ✓ Place food scraps in waste containers or garbage bags; promote use of scraping ware prior to washing.
- ✓ Place a waste basket in the bathroom to dispose of solid wastes.

- ✓ Disposable diapers and personal hygiene products do not belong in the sewer system.

Checklist for managing fat, oil and grease in household kitchens:

- ✓ Collect waste oil in a suitable, secure container.
- ✓ Use strainers in sink plug holes (and empty contents into the bin).
- ✓ Do not pour boiling hot water down the sink to try to dissolve fat and grease. It does not work!

### When sewers are blocked...

When sewers are blocked sinks, baths, showers and toilets do not flush out waste water, while sewage seeps from drains and manhole covers in cases of heavy blockages. If a sewer blockage is contained to a single house or business, it is the owner or tenant's responsibility to call a registered plumber to unblock and flush the sewer pipes. If the blockage affects more than two houses or businesses in a particular street the Liquid Waste Division of the Municipality must be informed.

Similarly, if sewerage seeps from drains or manhole covers in the street, the municipality must be informed immediately.

### Contacts

The Health Division of the Municipality provides health and hygiene training for kitchen staff of retail and food preparation businesses. The Division also stocks a selection of videos relating to kitchen hygiene that can be borrowed for training purposes.

For more information contact the following divisions of the Municipality:

Liquid Waste	214 308
Emergency Blockages	081 124 8324
Health Division	201 3288