



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT KITCHEN VENTILATION & FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS

Q: Is a commercial kitchen fire suppression system required to protect the cooking equipment in our community hall, church, town hall, meeting facility or other similar occupancy?

A: The size of the facility or the amount of cooking is not a factor and does not negate the requirements of NFPA 96, Standard for Ventilation Control and Fire Protection of Commercial Cooking Operations. It dictates that cooking equipment used in processes producing smoke or grease-laden vapors must be equipped with an exhaust system that complies with this (NFPA 96) standard. Most states and provinces have adopted NFPA 96 through their Building and Fire Codes and compliance requires the installation of an approved commercial kitchen system.

Q. How often should the exhaust system be cleaned?

A. Depending on the volume and type of cooking it could be every 3 months, 6 months or annually but any time there is a buildup of grease the system must be cleaned.

Q: For years, having a 40B: C rated sodium bicarbonate extinguisher in my cooking area was acceptable. Why am I now being told to replace it with a new class "K" rated fire extinguisher?

A: The fire hazard has simply changed and become more difficult to control. While the old 40B:C sodium bicarbonate fire extinguisher requirement existed for many years, it is no longer suitable for addressing many of the newer forms of cooking appliances and cooking oils commonly used today. Dry chemical extinguishers are not effective in removing the tremendous heat that is generated by this type of hazard. The fire can easily reignite or won't be extinguished at all. Leaving the BC sodium bicarbonate extinguisher in place provides a false sense of fire safety. The new "K" class extinguishers are much better suited to properly handle the special cooking appliance fire hazards found in commercial kitchens.

Q: Where should my remote pull station be located?

A: A remote pull station should be 42 - 48 inches above the finished floor in the main path of exit travel and be a minimum of 10 feet and a maximum of 20 feet from the hazard.

Q: Does a solid fuel appliance need its own fire system, hood, exhaust fan?

A: NFPA 96 requires that solid fuel appliances have their own exhaust fan and hood but not its own fire system. The exception is that a hood may be shared if it is used with non-grease producing appliances.

Q: Why does the system require make-up air?

A: An exhaust system will remove air from the premise and a Make-up Air system will replace that with fresh air maintaining a balanced ambient air pressure.

Q: Is a building permit required to install a commercial kitchen exhaust system in an existing building?

A: Yes a permit is required in addition to engineered drawings to have such an exhaust system installed.

Q: Is a Fire Suppression System always required? Under what circumstances is it not required?

A: Yes, a Fire Suppression System is required under NFPA and local fire codes in all grease cooking applications. It is not always required for Type 2 cooking such as pizza ovens, convection ovens and some steam cooking exhaust systems.