

# Staying A Step Ahead

Proactive grease management for your kitchen exhaust system.



By Joe Salpietra

*Director,  
Ellis Fibre USA*

Restaurant owners, operators and managers routinely seek out effective grease management solutions that simplify cleaning and maintenance of kitchen equipment, floors, grease traps and exhaust systems. A top concern of any owner, operator or facility manager is grease management in the kitchen. In particular, grease buildup in a kitchen exhaust hood can lead to quick-spreading fires that are difficult to extinguish. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), over 40% of all fires start in the kitchen, which is why grease management strategies are so important.

The importance of cleaning kitchen equipment, as well as the hazards of not doing so, is often emphasized. However, methods for effectively preventing or reducing grease buildup in the equipment is not communicated as frequently. By successfully preventing grease buildup, restaurants can reduce costs and hassles of cleaning exhaust systems, equipment and grease traps. Additionally, they will be creating a cleaner, healthier and safer work environment for their employees.

The goal is to find a better way to manage grease proactively, while it

is easy to handle and before it has a chance to cause a big problem. Proactive grease management is the best solution!

## PROACTIVE GREASE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS FOR EXHAUST SYSTEMS

Operators are now installing all-natural, disposable fiber-based filter systems onto the front-end of the exhaust system to better capture grease particles. Most of the early versions of fiber-based systems were made principally of wool. New second generation, disposable, fiber-based filters have further improved the grease capture effectiveness. These recent advancements in fiber-based systems are the result of a selected blend of fibers chosen for their specific grease capturing and filtering properties while also being flame resistant and eco-friendly. The new generation of fiber-based filters has improved grease collection effectiveness about 20% over earlier generations and also improved performance over fire and heat.

These new proactive front-end systems work to reduce the amount of grease particles that enter into the ducts and rooftop extractors by attracting grease to the fibers, thereby removing the grease from the airflow prior to entry into the exhaust system.

When used alone, traditional metal baffle filters in an exhaust hood catch less than 15% of typical cooking grease particles, allowing over



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85% of grease particles to enter the duct system. These new fiber-based filter add-ons are used in combination with metal baffle filters and can improve capture effectiveness to more than 97% of grease particles generated from cooking. As a result of using these new, improved fiber-based filters, exhaust systems and roofs are kept grease-free significantly longer, requiring less cleaning and maintenance. Restaurants generally conduct costly exhaust and duct cleanings at least four times per year, but restaurants using the fiber-based filter add-ons can often reduce this costly process to once a year or less.

In addition to cutting down on exhaust system cleanings, using the fiber-based filter add-ons significantly reduces the frequent need to clean the traditional metal baffle filters. Depending on the operation, metal baffle filters usually require cleaning three or more times per week. For fire safety reasons, many restaurant operators require nightly cleaning of the metal baffle filters. A typical cleaning of all baffles in a 12-baffle hood system will average around 1 hour of labor and around 40 gallons of water, depending on whether the baffles are soaked in a three-compartment sink or run through the dish machine. Some operators do both processes! Since the disposable, fiber-based filters serve as a first line of defense in trapping grease particles before they reach the metal baffles, the metal baffles may need to be cleaned only once a month rather than nightly. This represents a substantial savings in labor, detergents and water. It also results in a very happy kitchen staff that no longer has to remove greasy baffles for cleaning every night! Also, roofs will require fewer cleanings due to the significant decrease in the amount of grease entering into the exhaust system. This can lead to less wear and tear on a roof, resulting in substantial savings in roof maintenance and repair.

The disposable, fiber-based filters also have a positive environmental impact. Most fiber-based filters are all-natural, sustainable and biodegradable. In addition, using disposable, fiber-based filters reduces significantly the amount of grease discharged by a restaurant into the local wastewater system, which typically occurs when

metal baffle filters are cleaned in commercial dishwashers or soaked in three-compartment sinks.

Recently, the Apple American Group performed a field trial in Southern California using an improved second generation, disposable fiber-based filter and found the system to perform extremely well. Due to recent advancements in filter framing technology, the initial cost of installation of a fiber-based system is generally less than the cost of a hood cleaning. The cost/benefit analysis for the Apple American Group indicated a 100% return on investment in less than 3 months. Additionally, many other operational and environmental benefits were recognized, such as a significant reduction in water consumption.

Damasio Alvarez, an area director for Apple American Group, Southern California, reports, "For a multi-unit operator using the [fiber-based filter system], it provides great comfort knowing that all exhaust systems are being uniformly kept clean for longer periods of time, thereby significantly reducing our risk of a devastating fire. How do you put a value on that benefit?"

Additionally, Loretta Cochneuer, general manager of an Applebee's in Murrieta, California, had this to say: "Using the disposable, fiber-based filter system is simply easier than the alternative — it works and it saves me


money! Also, my kitchen staff loves using it."

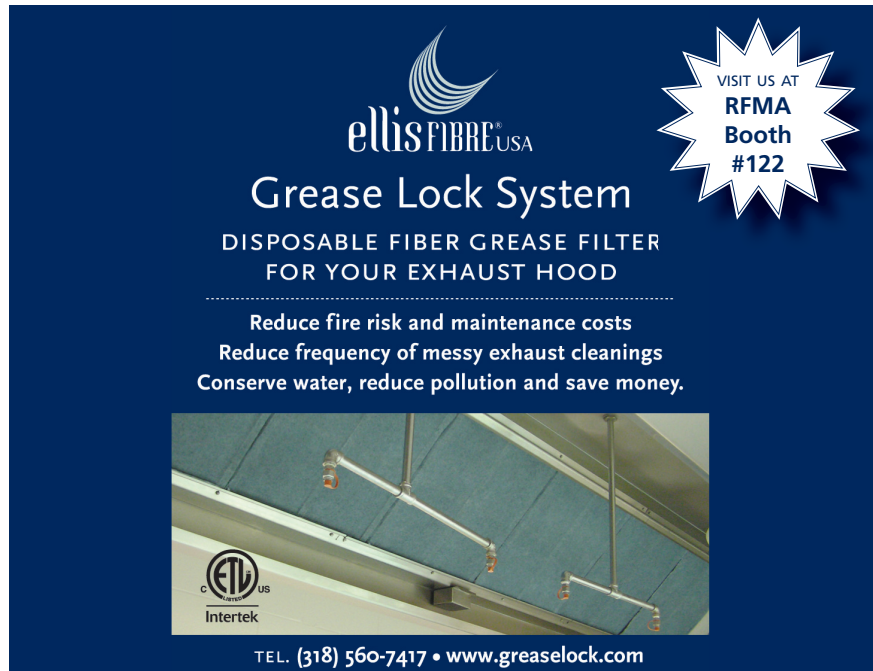
The Apple American Group has begun installation of the [system] at all Southern California and Nevada locations to proactively manage grease in the exhaust system.

### A BETTER SOLUTION

Grease will always be a constant in the kitchen, but the key is to proactively fight grease before its accumulation becomes a danger. By using fiber-based filters in combination with traditional metal baffle filters, restaurants can capture more grease particles in the disposable filter, thereby reducing grease in the duct and exhaust system.

Implementing *proactive* grease management strategies will improve workplace conditions by making them a healthier and safer environment and also have positive environmental benefits. Using disposable fiber-based filters is proactive and more efficient, safe and environmentally friendly than using only traditional metal filters.

Restaurant operators have many cleaning products at their disposal; however, identifying the products specifically engineered to proactively combat grease in the kitchen will make them more effective. If you want to win the fight against grease, you have to be proactive! 



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