Greetings!

Grease trap Use and Maintenance in your facility

Cooking is an important and critical component of operations in any accommodation facility. This process requires the use of fats and oils in preparing delicious foods that all relish! On the other hand, cooking and cleaning utensils ends up generating a lot of waste water in the form of grey water containing fats, oils and grease. While it’s a simple process to get rid of fats, oils and grease at our homes by just pouring it into an empty can, it is a difficult task for large-scale establishments such as schools, restaurants and tourism accommodation facilities. This is because these large-scale establishments generate much larger volumes of waste water. To manage the fats, oils and grease contained in the grey water that is passed down the drain, a special device called a grease trap is installed in the plumbing from the kitchen. In this week’s eco byte, we will highlight for you the purpose, basic functioning, sizing and proper maintenance of grease traps.

a) Purpose of a grease trap and how it functions

In the simplest of terms, a grease trap is “a trap” in a drain or waste pipe to prevent grease from passing into a sewer system. It functions by cooling warm or hot greasy water. Through cooling,
It is able to separate different layers of wastes from the kitchen. Since the fats, oils and grease are lighter in density they will eventually float and be trapped by the grease trap and the cooled grey water (without fats, oils and grease) will continue to flow to the wastewater treatment plant (see the illustration below)

(Source: https://www.cleanmyseptic.com)

b) Grease trap sizing

Choosing the right size of a grease trap to use is one of the most important decisions that any facility could make. It can either ensure efficiency in your grey water management or it can create significant problems for your facility. It’s as critical as that! With a too small grease trap, the unit will not properly perform its function of preventing grease, oils and fats from passing freely through the drain and sewer lines unless you clean it frequently. On the other hand, with a too large grease trap unit, you run the risk of creating problems downstream as sulfuric acid may be created within the tank. Therefore, it is important to seek guidance from a professional, a manufacturer or a supplier before installing a grease trap in your operations.

c) Maintenance of a grease trap

Proper functioning of a grease trap requires regular cleaning. You can only achieve this when you have a cleaning schedule for your grease trap. It’s highly recommended you have the schedule and adhere to it all the times. How frequently you clean your grease traps will depend on the following factors:
Cleaning practices in the kitchen: It’s necessary that grease, fats and oils be scrapped from the plates and ‘sufurias’ before being washed. This will result in less grease, fats and oils being drained.

Types of food: Preparation of foods that result in more grease, fats and oils produced such as meats among others will mean that you will need to clean your grease trap more frequently.

The amount of food: Busy businesses lead to more waste generated and washed down the drains. For example for tourism accommodation facilities, during high season, you will need to clean your grease traps more frequently.

A well maintained grease trap has a deep layer of water. On the other hand, a grease trap that is not well maintained has a thick layer of sludge with minimal water passage. The picture below will show you a grease trap in one of the tourism accommodation facilities that is not well maintained.

d) What problems could arise if a grease trap is not well maintained?

If the grease trap is not cleaned when needed, the sludge in the tank becomes thick and may begin to escape through the outlet. This will lead to blockage in the sewer lines (pipes) and could
cause the grease traps and drains containing the foul smelling wastewater to flood out. Further to this, your facility may be subject to disciplinary action from Directorate of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) or public health department in your locality, for not maintaining health and safety standards as required by law.

Proper maintenance of a grease trap has been identified as one of the critical areas that businesses including tourism accommodation facilities need to address. We therefore hope that through this article you have been enlightened and you will ensure proper maintenance of the grease traps in your facility as an ecotourism best practice.