

VENTILATION

# Extract ventilation requires stricter regs, says BESA

/ BY EWEN ROSE

**K**itchen extract ventilation should be re-classified as Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) to protect catering staff from growing threats to their health, according to the BESA.

Re-classifying kitchen extract systems as LEVs would mean they were subject to more stringent regulation and inspection, leading to more regular cleaning and maintenance to improve their ability to remove harmful breathable fumes and organic compounds from the air.

An increase in deadly carbon monoxide fumes from solid fuel cookers, barbecues and pizza ovens is putting commercial kitchen staff at risk and the new fashion for placing layers of 'volcanic rock' on top of traditional gas grills is creating a new source of harmful emissions, including greatly increasing the amount of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) detected in the air.

The ventilation hygiene industry's current best practice guidance already



recommends that kitchen extract systems are regularly checked and cleaned, but commercial kitchen owners and operators would face greater scrutiny and legal pressure if their systems were re-classified to fall in line with other industrial processes such as factories; welding shops; spray paint booths and woodworking facilities.

There are almost 13,000 deaths each year from occupational lung disease and cancer caused by past exposure to chemicals and dust at work according to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

↗ Kitchen workers could be exposed to potentially high levels of carbon monoxide

Currently, 45,000 systems are classified as LEVs across the UK, but BESA points out there are more than 500,000 commercial catering establishments – all of which should have some form of grease extract ventilation playing a key role in protecting workers' health and reducing the risk of fire.

BESA technical consultant Paul Downing said: "Many of these kitchens are now, effectively, cooking with solid fuel because they place charcoal on top of their gas-fired cookers in order to produce the increasingly fashionable chargrill flavour. As a result, kitchen workers are being exposed to potentially high levels of carbon monoxide and other airborne particulates harmful to health.

"While industry best practice already highlights the importance of cleaning and maintaining these systems so they continue to work effectively; re-classifying them as LEVs would send a powerful message about their crucial health and safety role as well as subjecting their owners to much closer scrutiny and inspection."

"There is no grey area with LEVs: It is the law that these are tested every 14 months and this could be transformational for ventilation hygiene. Employers have a duty of care – stated under the COSHH regulations – to any staff exposed to cooking fumes, which could be carcinogenic."

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