

Chapter Eleven – Service Providers

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Don Stewart examining a fire-extinguishing nozzle within a hood

Service Providers

Service Requirements

The maintenance of exhaust and fire-extinguishing systems is very much an out-of-sight out-of-mind service. The importance of having proper service is only emphasized after a fire.

NFPA 96, Section 4.1.3: The following equipment shall be kept in good working condition:

- (1) Cooking Equipment*
- (2) Hoods*
- (3) Ducts (if applicable)*
- (4) Fans*
- (5) Fire-Extinguishing systems*
- (6) Special Effluent or energy control equipment*

4.1.3.1 Maintenance and repairs shall be performed on all components at intervals necessary to maintain good working condition.

So many fires could have been prevented if proper maintenance had been performed. New changes in the 2011 NFPA 96 clarify just how important maintenance is.

NFPA 96, 11.1.6 Cooking equipment shall not be operated while its fire-extinguishing system or exhaust system is nonoperational or impaired.

NFPA 96, 11.1.6.1 Where the fire-extinguishing system or exhaust system is nonoperational or impaired, the systems shall be tagged as noncompliant, and the owners or the owner's representative shall be notified in writing of the impairment.

NFPA 96, Section 11.2.8: Where required, certificates of inspection and maintenance shall be forwarded to the authority having jurisdiction.

Listed hoods, fire suppression systems and special effluent or energy control equipment (i.e. water wash and UV hoods, air pollution control devices, odor control etc.) normally require written contracts for regularly scheduled maintenance.

Responsible service providers realize they are liable if they do not inform their customers of serious fire hazards. These hazards will vary depending on a number of circumstances.

The service requirements for appliances, fire-extinguishing and exhaust systems are handled by the following trades:

- Appliance Maintenance
- Water Wash Hood Mechanical Maintenance
- Ultraviolet Hood Maintenance
- Recirculating Systems Servicing
- Fire-Extinguishing Servicing
- Portable Extinguisher Servicing
- Damper Links
- Exhaust Cleaning

Each of these trades is separate and distinct. There are some companies that provide more than one of these services, but the work is usually done by different personnel and at different times of the day (or night).

The required qualification and competencies of these services vary. Each has some level of documentable skill requirements.

The Development of Certification

Since the 1998 edition of NFPA 96, exhaust inspections (for cleanliness) and exhaust cleaners were required to be *Trained, Qualified and Certified (TQC) acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction*.¹

By 2004, these requirements were expanded to also include those who work on appliances and fire-extinguishing systems.

As of the publication of this manual, the question “*What is acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction?*” is only beginning to be defined.

Service providers in each of these fields have some understanding of what their “Standard of Care” should be. Some fields are better defined than others. This chapter will provide only a general understanding of those standards of care.

Point of interest: A one-person crew usually performs the servicing of fire-extinguishing systems, water wash hoods, and air pollution control systems. This individual would be TQC according to the listing of the component manufacturer’s training and qualification standards. Regarding exhaust cleaning, crews of two or more are used. The Crew Leader (at least) should be trained, qualified and certified. Nationally, the requirement for TQC exhaust cleaners lags the other commercial kitchen service trades. There are nationally recognized third parties training and certifying protocols available for all of these trades.²

Nationwide, there are large cleaning and fire-extinguishing service corporations who contract local companies to do their fire-extinguishing servicing and/or exhaust cleaning. Additionally, many local companies will use subcontractors to do the actual service/cleaning. Confirm the employment status of those who actually performed the work and under what company name(s) the work was done. Is the individual who actually performed the work trained, qualified and certified?

Defining Competency

Regarding servicing, the question inspectors and system owners need to ask is:

“Is a Complete and Professional Job taking place?”

Since the 2004 Edition of NFPA 96, formal definitions were developed for competent service providers. These definitions clarify whom and what is required for the AHJ to determine competency.

- **Trained:** A person who has become proficient in performing a skill reliably and safely through instruction and practice/field experience acceptable to the AHJ. Formal and/or technical training may be administered by the employer or recognized training program.
- **Qualified:** A competent and capable person or company that has met the requirements and training for a given field acceptable to the AHJ.
- **Certified:** A formally stated recognition and approval of an acceptable level of competency, acceptable to the AHJ. The manufacturer of the listed equipment being serviced or an independent third party may provide certification.

New Change to 2011 NFPA 96, 11.4 and 11.6 (Inspections and Cleaning): Requirements are that the individual is the one who is required to be Trained, Qualified and Certified, not the company.

Unfortunately this change clouds the “qualifications” which are generally considered to be adequate insurance and business license, which are held by a company, not necessarily an individual.³

Question to Inspectors: What is your department's policy toward holding any of these services responsible?

See *Questions to Ask Service Providers* in the *Inspections Chapter*.

¹ See NFPA 96, Chapter 11 Procedures for the Use and Maintenance of Equipment, Annex A & B.

² For Ackland Certification Protocol, see Appendix Chapter.

³ PA Certification is specific, there must be at least one certified individual on the cleaning or inspecting crew. If a cleaning company were to claim to be PAC and not have at least one individual on the job who is PAC, then their company qualification is void.

Trained

From a practical point of view both the servicing company and the responsible person on the actual job site (Crew Leader) requires some level of documented training.

This training should include:

- Understanding the local Fire Codes that they are working under
- Recognizing serious deficiencies in the exhaust or fire-extinguishing system
- How to communicate deficiencies or other issues back to the property owner
- Safety issues related to their trade
- Where applicable – How to repair systems

Company Qualified

These qualifications are required of a company regardless of the service provided:

- General Liability Insurance
- Business License
- Worker's Compensation (State/Industrial) Number

Crew Leader Qualifications

- Factory Authorized Training or Certification
- Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) (USA) Training and Certification
- Workplace Hazardous Material Information System (WHMIS) (Canada) Training and Certification
- Specific equipment training
- A written lockout, ladder, confined space, or other safety issues policy

Certified

Certification is the process of documenting proven training and qualifications.

The overall industry objective of TQC is to achieve a level of competency that is acceptable to all Authorities Having Jurisdiction and the restaurant industry.

Appliance Maintenance

Restaurant appliances are put under a great deal of use. To ensure that the equipment continues to work as designed and installed, it must be maintained on a regular basis.⁴

Appliance controls are subject to breakage and wear; burners and heater coils must be kept free of combustible deposits. Additionally gaskets that prevent grease from running into areas where ignitions sources exist must be properly maintained and re-installed after maintenance. Temperature controls must be periodically examined to ensure that no unauthorized “repairs” which could impair the operation of safety devices, have taken place.

NFPA 96, sections 4.1.2 through 4.1.3.1 provides requirements that all components of the appliances, fire suppression and exhaust must have maintenance and repairs at necessary intervals.

Improperly maintained appliances and equipment is one of the biggest causes of fire spread in kitchen fires. If the appliances are not fire safe, the suppression system not maintained or clogged with grease or the ducting system packed with grease, you have the formula for a very serious fire.

⁴ See NFPA 96, 3.3.37