

Article Submission for VBCOA Newsletter Publication:

Working Together to Fight the Fat

Since 2007, Hampton Roads municipal sewer authorities have been working together to keep fats, oils, and grease (FOG) from harming the sanitary sewer system. To date, the region's 17 local jurisdictions have collaborated to develop a regional model FOG ordinance, technical standards for the installation and maintenance of grease control devices, and educational programs targeted at both residents and commercial employees handling grease-laden waste. In addition to regional collaboration among wastewater professionals, managing a successful FOG Program requires effective and continuous dialogue between the local wastewater officials, the public health authority, and building code officials, who all have a stake in protecting public health.

When FOG is discharged to the sanitary sewerage system, it accumulates and leads to sanitary sewer overflows posing a threat to public health and the environment. Each overflow costs a municipality thousands in cleanup costs and potential fines. Stopping FOG at the source is key. Local building code officials are the first line of defense against FOG by ensuring food service establishments (FSEs) have the proper pretreatment equipment in place. Sources of FOG are varied and can include fatty foods, cooking oils, food scraps, utensils, dinnerware, salad dressings, deep fried foods, batters, icing, dairy products, ice cream/smoothies, frozen yogurt, and more. Working together with local FOG program coordinators ensures appropriately-sized grease control devices are installed when an FSE is built, renovated, or has a change of use.

If you haven't met the FOG program coordinator in your jurisdiction, you're missing out on a valuable ally. Talk to your local counterparts who join you on the front lines in the fight against FOG. By opening the lines of communication between officials in wastewater, public health, and building codes, we can more effectively protect sanitary sewer infrastructure, save money, expand resources, and improve the overall health and well-being of our communities.