

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

About the Lake Stevens Sewer District Pretreatment Program and Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG)

## Why is my business on the list for pretreatment?

The District is required by its federal and state regulators to have a pretreatment program in place which mitigates the introduction of conventional pollutants, as well as the introduction of fats, oils, and grease (FOG) to the sewer system. All commercial businesses within the District's boundaries that serve food and discharge into the publicly owned treatment works (POTW) are included. Even if you did not pay the fee or were not inspected in years past, you are included in the program, including but not limited to restaurants, churches, and daycares.

## Most of the water we use isn't going down the drain so why is the fee based on water usage?

The District has established three broad categories to estimate the discharge from a business into the POTW; think of it as small, medium, and large. Since we do not have an economical way to measure the wastewater entering the POTW at each location, the estimate is made based on the water usage by the business. For some water systems, such as a sprinkler system, a deduction meter may be installed to track when a significant portion of water is not going down the drain, which can be eliminated from the usage calculation. See "Where does my fee go?" for more information.

## We don't have deep fryers, so we don't produce FOG.

Contrary to popular belief, most of the FOG entering the POTW is not from deep fryers. Ordinary items such as lotions, cooking oil, lard, shortening, meat fats, sauces, gravy, mayonnaise, butter, ice cream, soups, dairy, and food scraps are also significant sources of FOG.

## Where does my pretreatment fee go?

The pretreatment fee is assessed annually. The money is used by the District to maintain the pretreatment program, which includes inspections, education, FOG Grant Program awards, and additional maintenance of the sewer system.

## Why did the pretreatment program change?

The District's pretreatment program was first introduced with education as the focus. With a few years of experience, the program has been updated to make the fee structure easier for the customer and ensure the District is compliant with the regulations placed upon it by federal and state regulators.

## What is a grease trap/interceptor?

Grease traps are small FOG removal units that are used where the flow of water and the residual grease from the kitchen is low. They are customized to operate in a low water pressure environment with the flow rate between 10 to 50 gallons per minute. The size of the grease trap is small, varying from a small iron box to as big as a mini-fridge. They are installed inside the kitchen, generally beneath the sink.

A grease interceptor is a big size FOG removal unit. This unit is ideal for the use in large-scale food establishments where a large amount of grease is generated. The equipment is designed to operate in a high-pressure water environment with a flow rate of more than 50 gallons per minute. Due to the large size they are installed outside a food establishment, usually beneath the concrete (underground).

## Do I need a grease trap/interceptor? How often does it need cleaned?

If your business produces FOG from food waste from manufacturing, processing, cooking, or serving, you may need a grease trap or interceptor. Grease interceptors and grease traps require regular cleaning depending on the

size and amount of grease in the system. It is recommended the grease trap/interceptor be drained as soon as the solid/grease layers occupy 25% of the trap's space. Failure to maintain the device will lead to more plumbing problems and possible health concerns. When the District's Pretreatment Staff inspects the grease trap quarterly, they will inform you if it needs more frequent cleaning.

### What about other forms of pretreatment?

The Department of Ecology requires amalgam separators compliant with EPA regulations to prevent scrap amalgam waste typically from dental offices from entering the POTW. The District will establish specific pretreatment regulations for any significant industrial users discharging to the POTW. Certain businesses, such as car washes and vehicle maintenance facilities, are required to have sand-oil interceptors.