

Surge in vent hygiene compliance as fire safety awareness grows

2 years ago



Demand for cleaning and maintenance of kitchen extract ventilation systems has increased dramatically in the past year, according to the industry's newly rebranded certification scheme [BESA Vent Hygiene Register](#) (VHR).

There has been a 78% increase in the number of works notified to the VHR digital database since last March with the annual total passing 21,000 for the first time. The dramatic increase has been attributed to more clients, insurers and fire officers recognising the importance of these systems to the fire integrity of buildings.

There is at least one serious fire in a UK commercial kitchen every day, and owners are becoming increasingly aware that by improving the maintenance of their grease extraction systems, ventilation and ductwork, they can minimise the risk of a fire spreading. As a result, thousands more systems are now being cleaned in compliance with the industry's [TR19® Grease Specification](#), Fire Risk Management of Grease Accumulation within Kitchen Extraction Systems, according to VHR.

Formerly known as the BESCA Ventilation Hygiene Elite scheme, it has been rebranded to reflect the growing profile of the profession and to help it prepare for formal government regulation. It is managed by the [Building Engineering Services Association](#) (BESA) which is promoting ventilation hygiene as a key element of the wider building safety agenda.

VHR is intended to become the ventilation hygiene equivalent of the mandatory Gas Safe Register, which transformed the safety of gas installation work in the UK. It is recognised by the insurance fire risk body RISCAuthority, and by the London Fire Brigade which recently updated its guidance for catering premises

to include new measures from TR19® Grease.

Vanguard

“Despite its central role in building safety, this remains an unregulated sector,” said BESA’s head of certification Duncan Sibbald. “The 150 plus members of the VHR are the professional vanguard pushing the industry towards higher standards and regulatory compliance which is very much in tune with the culture change being driven by the Building Safety Act.

“These companies recognise the importance of being able to provide third party audited evidence to their clients that their kitchen extract systems have been cleaned in compliance with the industry specification.”

Members’ clients receive a VHR Post Clean Completion Certificate which is a crucial piece of evidence for any potential insurance claim or fire report.

The Register recently won the Best Use of Technology Award at the prestigious [Trade Association Awards 2023](#) for its success in creating and then rapidly expanding its database for notifying compliant cleans.

“Digital technology has helped us make rapid progress in providing a much-needed way for responsible firms to demonstrate to clients, insurers and the general public that they are working hard to keep people safe in buildings,” said Sibbald.

“However, while we are delighted to have passed the 21,000 compliant cleans milestone, we recognise we still have a very long way to go because there are still tens of thousands of systems out there waiting to be brought up to standard – and many are putting building occupants at considerable risk.”

Sibbald added that, being more recognisably “part of the wider BESA community” will help VHR develop a regulated framework linked to the improved transparency, competence and compliance demanded of the building services sector in the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster.

“Vent hygiene is more than just cleaning, it’s fire prevention,” said Sibbald. “This message is getting through to a much wider audience now as shown by the surge in the use of our database to register compliant cleans, which is translating into greater reassurance for clients, insurers, and fire officers.”

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