

Must People Die?

The Minister of Transport, Building, and Housing, Ole Birk Olesen, refuses to tighten up control of flammable grease in ventilation ducts.

By Ebbe Sønderriis

Should a fire occur under the cooker hood in a restaurant, grease in ventilation ducts is easily lit. The Minister of Transport, Building, and Housing, Ole Birk Olesen, refuses to introduce supervisory duties and documentation requirements with regard to the cleaning of the ventilation system, although it constitutes a great risk for the residents and hotel guests living on the floors above the restaurant.

Evidence of this was seen in March when a violent fire broke out in Vesterbrogade in Copenhagen. The fire started in a wok restaurant on the ground floor and quickly spread up through the ventilation ducts. The Copenhagen Fire Department must respond to such fires several times a year, Operations Manager Tim Ole Simonsen says.

No Supervision

The owner of the building is solely responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of the ventilation ducts. The municipality holds the authority over buildings, but they are not obliged to perform any supervisory work. In the wake of the fire in Vesterbrogade, the Copenhagen Municipality stated that they only conduct supervision in case of a complaint.

The Danish Environment Technology Association suggests that the municipalities be imposed to conduct supervision in order to reduce the risk of fire. Documentation from a certified company should be a requirement.

Member of Parliament, Rasmus Prehn (S), has asked the Minister whether he intends to ensure a public control and supervisory scheme. Ole Birk Olesen's answer is no, and



The Minister of Transport, Building, and Housing, Ole Birk Olesen, believes that conducting control and supervision work on the ventilation systems in use will require too many resources from the municipalities and building owners.

he adds: "We expect that both municipalities and building owners would need to allocate substantial resources to such a control and supervisory scheme."

An Efficient Solution

It is possible to clean cooker hoods and ventilation manually, but the company JIMCO A/S

offers a more efficient solution. The company installs ultraviolet lights behind the filters of the hood. The powerful UVC radiation destroys the grease and oil particles and forms ozone which burns them with no heat emission, Michael Kløcker from JIMCO A/S explains. The company has won a European Environmental Business Award for its technology.

A McDonald's restaurant which has had the equipment installed since its construction demonstrates ventilation ducts so clean that you can still see the four years old stickers inside, Michael Kløcker states.

Short ROI period

A facility for a McDonald's restaurant with three cooker hoods costs approximately 100,000 DKK. In return, the restaurant will cut back on expenses for manual cleaning of the ducts and hoods, avoid changing filters 4-6 times a year, and reduce the consumption of electricity previously consumed to suck air through filters that were full of dirt and oil, Michael Kløcker explains. The investment return will be measurable in 2-3 years.

"In addition, we have agreed with Alm. Brand that all restaurants furnished with our equipment will get a less expensive insurance because the risk of fire is lower", he continues.

JIMCO A/S is represented in more than 30 countries and sells a considerable number of facilities abroad. "I do not understand why Denmark does not take a closer look at their neighbouring countries. In



In March, the Copenhagen Fire Department had to put out a roof fire causing 10 meters high flames in Vesterbrogade in Copenhagen. The fire quickly consumed the entire top storey. The fire started in a wok restaurant on the ground floor.

Germany and Sweden, the restaurant owners are required to clean the ducts every three months. In Sweden, the restaurants must provide the authorities with documentation for this cleaning. The same is true in the US. In Croatia, the authorities demand that either

you clean the ducts or get Jimco's equipment installed", Michael Kløcker says. "I am fully convinced that the majority of the Danish restaurants are real fire traps," he says. "I have visited many different restaurants that never, or extremely rarely, clean their ducts.