An Introduction to BS6173: 2009 – Gas Interlocking Systems

BS6173 gives information regarding safety in the installation, use and maintenance of gas-fired equipment to catering and hospitality industries.

Whether contractor or in-house staffs are doing the work, the overseeing company must be CORGI – registered and the operatives must have a valid certificate of competence, relevant to the type of gas work involved.

The majority of catering kitchens nowadays use mechanical ventilation systems. This creates a more suitable and comfortable working environment.

Mechanical ventilation systems also have benefits for health and safety at work and good practice for hygiene and food safety.

These systems are designed to remove by-products from the cooking process and discharge them into a safe, external location.

Changes in the Standard which introduces this new requirement have caused confusion

In order to comply with BS6173: 2009 all new kitchens (built after September 2001) must have a gas interlocking system on the ventilation system

New installations or major refurbishments which require an interlocking system between the ventilation and the gas supply should not have an override function. The use of the override should be determined through a thorough risk assessment

This override function could conflict with the safe operation of the gas appliances beneath the ventilation system.

Any kitchen built prior to September 2001 which does not have a gas interlock system in place, must be assessed by a Gas Safe engineer in order to establish whether an unacceptable risk may arise.

Any possibility in which gas could be consumed by kitchen staff without the adequate ventilation must be considered as an unacceptable risk.

BS6173: 2009 states that it is not sufficient to have a mechanical ventilation system merely installed; it must also be operating correctly and interlocked with gas appliances

What is an Interlock?

This is a purpose-provided system which prevents the gas supply reaching kitchen appliances without the mechanical ventilation system being in operation.

It is required primarily to ensure the safety of staff members. If the ventilation system is not working correctly harmful gases such as carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide can reach dangerous levels.

Failing to comply with this Standard can result in:

- Risk to employees
- Insurance implications
- Kitchen closure
- HSE investigations
- Fines of up to £5,000
- Manslaughter charges in the worst case scenario

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