

Galley Fire at sea

This large fishing vessel arrived at dry docks for general structural maintenance work. Whilst preparing breakfast the cook was confronted with a pan flash igniting the skirting or the extraction hood.

The Issue:

The airborne oil residue is trapped by the filters leading to the extraction shaft of the oven hood. The oil that adheres to the stainless steel hood is gravitated down to the skirting gutter of the hood. It is this residue of oil that was overlooked in the cleaning program of the galley crew that ignited with the pan-flash.

What happened?

Due to an oversight in the maintenance program in the cleaning of the galley/oven hood, the residual oil was ignited by a pan-fire and brought under control with dry powder chemical fire extinguishers. The metal filters covering the opening to the extraction duct were cleaned the previous day which effectively prevented the fire to spill over into the ducting itself. The physical damage was minimal, but the potential damage was catastrophic for crew and ship. On closer inspection via an access hatch into the ducting and the use of UV camera's it was discovered that the shaft had not been cleaned since installation, which was 15 years earlier. The thickness of the oily/tarry substance left behind was five to six centimetres deep. The sides had a golden glare to them as the light passed due to oil clinging to the sides. Had the naked flames managed to gain access to this ignition source, the ship would have felt the effect with a very dangerous fire running the length of the accommodation within.

The Outcome:

Offshore Support Services was called to clean and sanitize the two oven hoods and the immediate adjacent ducting. As it turned out, we conducted an in depth cleaning, sanitizing and sterilization of the entire galley exhaust/extraction ducting unit. This involved the fogging of the hood with a very effective, environmentally friendly chemical, the physical removal of foreign matter from every inch of ducting, the application of a comprehensive sanitizing agent to the surface matter and the sterilizing of the ducting throughout via fogging. The entire operation was completed within two days without any major disruption for the galley crew who carried on with their normal duties throughout.

Learnings:

- Cleaning the outside of the oven hood is not enough, the inside required regular rigorous cleaning as well.
- Properly cleaned in-line filters can and did prevent the spread of fire.
- Having an up to date fire extinguisher available and at hand prevented a catastrophe.

For further information:

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