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B&ES WARNS THAT TOO MANY BUSINESSES ARE IGNORANT OF KITCHEN DUCTWORK FIRE HAZARD

B&ES warns that too many businesses are still ignorant of the fire hazard posed by kitchen extraction ductwork – yet the cost implications are enormous, with more and more insurance companies refusing to pay up if a fire is traced back to grease-laden or incorrectly fitted ductwork.

18 June 2012 – B&ES (the Building & Engineering Services Association) is warning that too many businesses are still ignorant of the fire hazard posed by kitchen extraction ductwork. B&ES says it's a case of 'out of sight, out of mind' but in a commercial kitchen, whether pub, fast food outlet, hotel or restaurant, dust and grease can readily build up in a kitchen's ventilation ductwork, becoming a serious potential fire risk. And fire is not the only hazard; grease-laden ductwork can become a breeding

ground for bacteria and insects, with attendant health and safety implications.

Bob Towse, Head of Technical and Safety at B&ES, comments, "Our member firms are regularly called to testify as expert witnesses in cases where fires have broken out in kitchens and then spread along grease-laden ductwork to other parts of the building.

"In many cases where a fire has been traced back to the kitchen extract system it has never been cleaned since the ductwork was installed. In any such circumstances where insurance companies uncover irregular or a complete absence of ductwork maintenance they are now rejecting fire damage claims and refusing to pay out because they can assert that warranties have been breached due to lack of proper cleaning regimes – having the extraction system cleaned is almost always a condition of their policies.

"It is worth bearing in mind too that changes to fire regulations introduced in 2005 placed a heavy responsibility on owners, landlords and managing agents to ensure risk assessments have been carried out in their buildings, including identification of potential ignition sources; failure to do so can lead to hefty fines and possible prison sentences.

"Adhering to the B&ES 'Guide to Good Practice – Internal Cleanliness of Ventilation Systems', which is endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive, and carrying out regular inspections and recommissioning is a good way to satisfy insurance companies that the right steps have been taken to properly clean kitchen extraction and ventilation systems, both to minimise fire risk and safeguard the health of employees.

"We recommend that systems are cleaned and recommissioned at least every 12 months; however some systems may need to be cleaned even more frequently than this due to the type of usage".

Copies of the B&ES 'Guide to Good Practice – Internal Cleanliness of Ventilation Systems' (TR19) is available from the B&ES Publications Unit in Penrith on 01768 860405 or via the B&ES website at: www.b-es.org.

Ends

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Note to Editors

Since its formation in 1904, B&ES, the Building & Engineering Services Association (formerly the HVCA) has represented the interests of companies engaged in a wide range of building and engineering services disciplines.

B&ES helps its members to build successful businesses by being the leading trade association for integrated building and engineering services and renewable technologies. It is a unifying force that promotes and monitors excellence; provides quality advice, guidance, training and support; generates market-leading thinking; and shapes the commercial environment through active representation.

B&ES members are subject to regular, third-party inspection and assessment of their technical competence and commercial capability, carried out by an independent certification body at least every three years.

Caption for picture at www.nextstepmarketing.co.uk/press:
'Kitchen extract ductwork must be cleaned on a regular basis to minimise fire risk.'