

Understanding Servicing

Modern catering equipment is manufactured to high engineering standards, designed for the punishing routine of a professional kitchen. Yet it is not indestructible and just as a car needs regular servicing to perform well and last, so does catering equipment.

Regular servicing is life enhancing and can spot potential problems before they cause a breakdown, which is likely to be far more expensive than the cost of servicing. Servicing will also highlight any impending dangers, such as worn gas connections or loose electrical wiring, which could be a hazard to both staff and premises.

Lastly, failure to have regular servicing in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and with service records to prove it, could work against a business in the event of any insurance claim for either damaged premises or injured staff.

Types of service arrangements

Most catering equipment comes with a manufacturer's warranty. The terms and guarantee period will vary, but both parts and labour are likely to be included. However, That warranty is for the unlikely event of a manufacturing defect occurring, it does not cover servicing or replacement of parts that have worn out through fair wear and tear or misuse. Failure to follow the manufacturer's servicing guidelines will also result in invalidating the warranty.

The recommended way of ensuring proper maintenance is carried out by professional engineers is to take out a service contract through the manufacturer, supplier of the equipment or a catering equipment service company. The service contract will cover all the kitchen equipment with varying levels of charging.

Charges vary by reasons such as servicing only, servicing and any labour charges for repairs needed, speed of response time, number of service visits a year, amount of equipment in the kitchen and location.

The temptation to only call a service engineer out when something breaks down is how to learn just how far down the pecking order in call-response time someone without a service contract is. With busy service engineers, their own service contracts and manufacturers' warranty work will take precedent, with random calls for help at the back of the queue.

Ensure all the detail of a contract is understood before signing it. Things such as mileage charges, is engineers' time charged by the quarter hour or full hour, are there premium rates for evening or weekend call-outs, what are response times, what exclusions are there and is there any minimum charges?

Can anyone repair catering equipment?

Definitely not. Gas equipment in particular is governed by strict laws. Only engineers who have a certificate of competence from the

Council for Registered Gas Installers, better known by its acronym of CORGI, can work on gas equipment, both mains gas and LPG.

There is separate certification and rules for working on domestic and non-domestic appliances. Domestic certificated gas engineers are not allowed to touch catering equipment. Evidence of the correct certification should always be asked for on any first visit.

Gas-fired cooking equipment is divided by CORGI into five individual certifications, each with their own piece of training and certification. For practical purposes, this means a catering engineer needs to be trained in the appropriate category for the equipment being serviced.

The main types of equipment in the five categories of catering competence in gas-fired catering equipment are:

Category 1: Boiling tables, open and solid top ranges, convection ovens, combi-ovens and bains-marie.

Category 2: Water boilers, boiling pans, steamers and dishwashers.

Category 3: Deep-fat fryers, bratt pans, griddles and grills.

Category 4: Fish and chip ranges

Category 5: Forced draught burner appliances, such as impingers and conveyor ovens.

Keeping servicing costs down

There are two factors that contribute greatly to servicing and repair costs. Abuse and misuse by kitchen staff can be very costly and is avoidable. Oven and fridge doors should be firmly closed, not slammed, equipment should not be loaded beyond recommended capacity or run empty if manufacturer's guidelines say it should not be. Water filtration systems should be installed to remove limescale before it gets into cooking and washing equipment pipework.

Proper daily cleaning routines will also contribute greatly to reducing servicing and repair costs. Any spillages should be cleaned immediately, particularly if food has spilled into gas jets, where the heat will carbonise the food and block the jets. Microwave ovens should be thoroughly cleaned at the end of every shift, door seal gaskets properly wiped down. Staff may be eager to go home, but neglecting cleaning will cost money.

How to find out more about servicing catering equipment

Talk to the experts.

The Catering Equipment Suppliers Association

Tel 020 7233 7724

E-mail: enquiries@cesa.org.uk

Website: www.cesa.org.uk

Note to editors:

CESA would like to contribute advice and technical editorial to any catering equipment feature being planned. Within our membership is unrivalled expertise. Use this information as it is written or as background information for your journalists. CESA makes no charge for any information it supplies. If you need further information, more in-depth technical contribution contact:

Keith Warren 020 7233 7724