

ANNOUNCER: You've tuned in to another edition of The Break Room. A

weekly conversation about how the City of St Augustine

works from those who do the work everyday. Hosted by the

City of St Augustine's Communications Director Melissa

Wissel. The Break Room offers a closer look at the different

city departments and provides updates on current and upcoming

projects and events. And now your host Melissa Wissel.

MELISSA: Welcome to The Break Room. Thanks for tuning in. I'm

Melissa Wissel, Communications Director for the City of St

Augustine. This week, I'm sharing The Break Room with Glabra

Skipp. She's our Environmental
Program Coordinator. She's been

with us several times and we
have brought in Kevin

McGinnis. Kevin is one of our
Environmental Compliance

Inspectors. Glabra, we're glad
to have you back and Kevin,

welcome. KEVIN: Thank you. MELISSA: Cheers to
your first appearance. KEVIN: I appreciate it. MELISSA: We are

glad to have you. We are
going to be talking about

specifically, we're going to
talk fats, soils, and grease,

which is Glabra's favorite topic.

But Kevin, since you're here,

we're going to talk more about
what you do. But we're talking

environmental programs and the

city is big on trying to be
green and doing our best to
keep up with keeping our
environmental, our environment
green and clean. So, tell me
again, remind me, what are the
big environmental programs that
you oversee? Glabra. Let's start
with that. GLABRA: So, there is a lot
of environmental programs we
work on. We wear many hats in
our day-to-day jobs. But today,
we're going to talk about the
fats, oils, and grease program.
Been on here lots of times to talk
about that one. Our cross
connection control program
which is backflow preventers
and our illicit discharge

program. MELISSA: So, let's get to fats, oils, and grease, because we're

going to take a little bit different spin on it. We

normally talk residential. It's usually our oil recycling

program. We're not talking about oil recycling today. We

are talking literally about fats, oils, and grease in terms

of grease traps and new restaurants, or restaurants in

general. Kevin, let's get you in here on the conversation.

We've got lots of restaurants, new and old, grease traps...

What's the deal with grease traps?

KEVIN: Grease traps are very very

important for restaurants.

Actually very important for our

sewer system, more importantly.

We have come up with a program

for new restaurants, and old

restaurants, actually, little

packet that we have developed...

more Glabra and the other team member,

Caroline, have developed. And we

go out and talk to restaurants

when they open and try to help them

out with the things that they

need to comply with for our

department. MELISSA: And we talk

environmental compliance. We

have a lot of things they have

to comply with. Grease traps,

though. I'm I'm trying to

envision a grease trap. Is it

like a box? Is it like a mouse

trap? I mean, I'm being funny

but, what is a grease trap look

like when you talk about you inspect them? How does that

work? KEVIN: Basically a grease trap is usually a rectangular

box. They vary in size. You could have a teeny tiny one

under your sink. You could have a a little bit bigger one

that's in the ground under your sink. You could have one that's

outside your back door. And also you could have big huge ones

for some of the bigger restaurants. We have

restaurants that have 1250 gallon ones and some of the

restaurants have two or three 12150 gallons grease traps linked

together because they have so many seats at the restaurant.

And that's basically how we size that. MELISSA: That's a lot of

grease. KEVIN: It's a lot of grease, yes. MELISSA: So, why is a grease trap

important though? I mean, in terms of, you know, you tell us

all time, don't put oil down the drain. I mean, but for the

restaurants, there's a huge environmental impact if we

don't have some type of regulation. KEVIN: Absolutely. Grease is

pretty nasty, as you all know I'm sure. But if you've ever

looked inside a grease trap, you would see even more how nasty

grease is.. MELISSA: And smell. KEVIN: And smell. And what it does to our pipes

and stuff like that. GLABRA: Yeah so what these big boxes do,

essentially, is allow, it slows the flow of the water down and

allows the water to separate out. The grease layer goes to

the top of the grease trap and solid sink to the bottom of the

grease trap. So, these grease traps are essentially trapping

the grease. Hence the name. And the solids as

well. So, it keeps it out of our sewer system, which is huge

because as we've talked about a lot over the years, grease

clogs our sewer pipes. So, our goal is to keep it out of the

sewer pipes and then these

restaurants have to either,

depending on the size, they can
clean it themselves or they

hire a company to come out and
clean the grease trap. MELISSA: Is there

a schedule that I have to
comply with, as well? Or is it, I mean,

how do I know when I'm
supposed to clean my my grease

trap? KEVIN: I guess one of the parts
of mine and Caroline's jobs is

to help people determine that.

I think the ordinance

is quarterly for grease traps.

But if we find that they aren't

needing to be cleaned
quarterly. We're not going to

make people spend a ton of
money. To clean them out,

so. MELISSA: And when you make those,
those we'll call it house calls

or restaurant calls, you go to
the restaurants. You work on

that when you're there, you look
at how much was there and you

you schedule something for the
future based on you think their

need is. KEVIN: The little
restaurants, we inspect them

twice a year, and the larger
ones we inspect once a year.

MELISSA: Okay and that's coffee shops,
ice cream shops, even if I'm a
coffee shop, I need a grease
trap? KEVIN: Absolutely. GLABRA: That's one of

the biggest misconceptions.
So, restaurants often

think that just because they
don't fry, they don't need a

grease trap, but that's not

true. So, it's fats, oils, and

grease. So, even coffee shops,

coffee can have up to 20% lipid

content, has fats in it.

And also like the creamers

and all the dairy products that

are added into coffee. Ice

cream shops as well have a lot

of dairy. MELISA: Don't even think

about it really. I mean a

grease trap. Okay. No. Nasty.

KEVIN: 90. Probably 90%, if not more of

the people we talk to that are

opening a ice cream shop or a

juice shop or coffee shop.

First thing out of their mouth.

We don't fry anything here

so why do we need a grease

trap? And then we try to

explain. To them why do
need a grease strap. MELISSA: And that

would, that flows into best
practices. Are are there some

best practices? Things that we
can avoid that we can actually

do? Or is it just a matter of...
it's inevitable, so you may as

well just have a grease strap.

GLABRA: So one of the biggest best

management practices that
restaurants can follow is using

sink strainers, keeping as much
out of the drain as they can.

We see facilities that have
a lot of dough production,

especially, are bad. But
keeping that out of the drain.

Using those strainers, putting
it in the trash, you know, we

don't want liquid waste in the trash.

But you know, keeping all the

solids out of the grease trap.

That all takes up capacity. So,

you can be out of compliance on
your grease trap if you just

have a lot of solids in your
grease trap. It's. MELISSA: Really?

GLABRA: Yeah, we look at the combined
grease and solids levels. MELISSA: So,

when you're inspecting the
grease trap, you're actually

looking kind of at what's in my
trash, what's in my grease

trap. That's what, that's what
you're evaluating? KEVIN: Yes,

absolutely and the solids that
Glabra are talking about. We

have a couple big restaurants.

That is how they are out of

compliance. Their grease is

fine, but they have so much

solids in the bottom of their

grease trap. That's why

they had to get it pumped out.

If they would just use some of

these best management

practices, they would not have

to spend the money to get it

pumped out as often so. MELISSA: Not

something I would think about.

GLABRA: I want to throw in there,

too. Floor screens. You know,

we think with floor screens. We

think. MELISSA: Floor screens, OK. GLABRA: Floor

screens. We think a lot about

sink drains, but also floor

screens. So, like all that

trash that builds up on a
restaurant floor. You

know, some times straws,
plastic forks, that sort of

waste. If that makes it down
into the sewer system, that's

going to cause big problems. KEVIN:

That's one of the biggest, one

of the biggest things we find
are straws and latex gloves and

stuff like that. So basically,
people are, I don't want to

accuse anybody, but a lot of
people take the strainers off

the floor drains at night.
To make it drain a little

quicker and so that's when that
stuff. Slips through there.

Slips through there. So we find
that a lot in the grease

tramps. MELISSA: And that, so I'm
envisioning a floor drain.

Would that be, I'm going to go, I
don't, I've never really been in

the back of a restaurant
kitchen. But I'm assuming it's

like in public bathrooms where
you've got a big drain

opening in the middle of the
floor that kind of goes toward

that? Is that what we find you
find in restaurant kitchens?

GLABRA: Yes. Correct. Now, that's
exactly what it looks like. But

I do want to point out that
bathroom, like waste, that goes

into a different waste pipe
than grease trap. So, but it

looks, it looks the same

though. And one other

thing I wanted to point out, too,

while we're talking about best

management practices, you know,

we're talking about restaurants.

But the same thing applies to

homeowners. So, you can, you know,

keep your pipes clean. You know,

grease builds up in your home

drains just, you know, maybe on a

little less you know scale.

Scale than in a restaurant. But you

know keeping the food waste out

of your system. You know wiping

your you know if you cooked

bacon. Pour that extra

grease into a can you know

bring it to our collection

event, or throw it in the trash.

But don't let it go down the
drain because every little drop

builds up and if you have a
clogged pipe on your, you know,

on your house plumbing, you're
responsible for that. So, it

can be expensive. MELISSA: And that's
especially true for folks with

septic. Because that's,
that is yours. GLABRA: Correct. KEVIN: Yes and

just to expand a little bit on
about the homeowners. It's not

just, again, it's not just
grease. You have salad

dressing, you have peanut
butter. Again, you have ice

cream, you have coffee creamer,
you have milk, all that stuff

is fats, oils, and grease. And
that causes problem new pipes.

MELISSA: And you guys are like the
buzzkill of all the stuff I run

down my drain. But I don't
think about it. But that's why

we're here. When in
doubt keep it out. Your

toilet is not a trash can.

Let's bring up all of

our goods, our good
environmental program slogans.

Slogans. KEVIN: Sorry and going back
to into the coffee shops and

ice cream shops and juice shops
and stuff like that. One of

the aha moments for those
owners when we go back, because

we go back in 3 months after
they open to inspect their grease trap and

when you open that thing up and
they see and smell what they.

Collected over three
months. They're like wow. Wow.

I would have never guessed that
all that stuff is in there. MELISSA: I

yeah, I wouldn't but I don't
envy your job either though. KEVIN: So

yeah yeah yeah, rotting dairy
products and rotting fruit and

stuff like that doesn't smell
very good so. MELISSA: And you can't

compost it, can you? Oh. Stumped
you guys on that one. GLABRA: Well it's

not really something that you
would put into your compost bin at

home. MELISSA: Right. You know, I'm kind of
being funny but yeah. GLABRA: But there

are you know hopefully in the

future there's grease waste

recovery facilities instead of
going to you know waste

management. That is something
that I know companies are

working on. Being able to
recover, you know not to be able

to use it again, but to have a
useful source for grease waste.

MELISSA: So that would be a question
though in all seriousness. Where does

it go? When you go to inspect
it, you actually do

clean them out. Obviously you
have to get rid of it or they

clean it out. How does that
work? KEVIN: They clean it out. They

can either do it themselves or
they can hire a company do it.

So, we try to get a lot of the

little people that have the

little undersink grease traps

to do it themselves, because it

cost a bunch of money.

To have somebody come come in

and do it. Like those little

grease traps, they, if you call

a company, they'll send a big,

huge truck with one of those

giant hoses and they stick it

in there and it's pumped out in

like 2 seconds and you're

paying them you know, 2,3, \$400 just to do that.

So, if you do it yourself every

month, it's not that hard.

And you just save yourself a

ton of money. MELISSA: And when you come

inspect those. So, let me let

me reiterate. So, you come and

you look at it and then I clean

it out? Or you're coming to see
that I've cleaned it out? Or is

it both? KEVIN: It's a little bit of
both. And we just check

to see if they're in compliance.

And like I said, we try to work

with people again to give them
sort of a schedule of when they

need to have it cleaned out and
stuff. MELISSA: And if I don't know what

I'm doing, I can call you guys
and you'll come show me. GLABRA: Yes.

You can call and we'll,
well we're not going to clean

it out for you. But we
will give you some tips and

helpful, you know and how to
guide and maybe we're we've

just put together a little
video that we can show you on

how to clean it out yourself.

Generally those are the

little tiny grease traps like
Kevin was mentioning for, you

know, a coffee shop. The large
grease traps, those require a

hauler. There's no way you can
do that yourselves. These

are big concrete units in the
ground. You're hiring a

hauling company that's going to
come pump that grease trap out.

Okay. And I also want to
mention that we talked about

frequency. So, quarterly
in general, some can go a

little longer, but some can't go
that long. So, some of the

smaller facilities, I mean,

they may have to clean it out

every week or two, depending on

how they're letting go down

that drain in the best

management practices that

they're employing. KEVIN: And people

complain about the smell and

doing it more frequently

definitely helps with that

situation, so. MELISSA: Yeah, that

can get rather smelly. Yes,

very. I never would have

thought about all that stuff.

But the, before we sign off. we

didn't even talk about. I didn't

even do a midway station

identification. You're about to

listen to a sign off on The

Break Room because we're about

to have to wrap it up. So that

means Kevin, you have to come

back and talk to me about

backflow prevention, preventers

and illicit discharge.

KEVIN: Absolutely. You got more stuff

that you do. You don't just

inspect greasy stink traps. No,

there's a lot more to do at

restaurants so. MELISSA: Okay. GLABRA;

Thank you for coming back with

Kevin. Thanks for having me

again. We're going to let him

steal the next show. GLABRA: Alright.

And and as I said, you have

been listening to The Break

Room. We are going to wrap it

up. If we didn't answer your

questions about grease traps or
other environmental programs,

send us an email to info@CityStAug.com. Of course,

you can find all of this
information on our website at

CityStAug.com. We want to
keep you informed about what's

happening in and around the
city and that you hear it here

from the people doing the work and
making it happen every day.

Until next time, thank you for
tuning in. You've been

listening to The Break Room, a
weekly program addressing

projects and programs offered by the City of St. Augustine.

Join us each week as the City's
Communications Director,

Melissa Wissel, has depth

conversations with the people

who make our town work to meet
the needs of our community. The

Break Room is produced by
Communication Specialist for

the City of St. Augustine,
Cindy Walker. See you at this

time next week for another
edition of The Break Room.