

Information Sheet No 14. IS THE WALL BEHIND THAT **COMMERCIAL CATERING EQUIPMENT NON-COMBUSTIBLE**

Don't be fooled by stainless steel or tiles

Introduction

From time to time, serious incidents have occurred where a fire has started in a wall behind commercial catering equipment. In such incidents the equipment was usually located directly against a wall, thought by the installer to be non-combustible because it was tiled or covered with stainless steel. Over time, heat passing through the tiles or the stainless steel caused material within the wall to ignite.

Walls that appear to be non-combustible, and those covered with ceramic tiles or sheet metal must be checked to ensure that they are not constructed internally or externally from combustible materials. In the case of commercial catering equipment, covering a combustible wall surface (such as plasterboard) with ceramic tiles or sheet metal will **not** provide heat protection.

In a situation where the wall has already been constructed, it may be necessary to refer to the structural drawings to determine the materials used.

Health Regulations – important reminder

Always check that the installation of commercial catering equipment will comply with local health authority regulations and requirements.

Clearance to a combustible surface

Commercial catering equipment must never be installed directly against a combustible wall unless permitted by the appliance installation instructions. Always check the instructions and the clearance requirements of AS 5601 - *Gas Installations*.

Some catering equipment manufacturers require that an air gap be maintained at the rear of an appliance for cooling purposes. Relevant details given in the appliance installation instructions regarding such air gaps must be observed. The airflow must not be obstructed.

It may be necessary to fit a spacer between the appliance and the wall to ensure the air gap is maintained at all times. Never remove a spacer fitted by the appliance manufacturer.

Combustible surfaces – temperature limitation

AS 5601 – Gas Installations contains an over-riding clause that limits the temperature of any nearby combustible surface. Refer clause 5.2.7:

“An appliance shall be installed such that the surface temperature of any nearby combustible surface will not exceed 65°C above ambient”.

Protection of combustible materials

Walls containing or constructed from combustible materials such as timber or plasterboard can, if necessary, be protected.

One method is to use a fire resistant material that complies with the requirements of AS 5601 – Gas Installations. An outer covering of ceramic tiles or sheet metal (such as stainless steel) can then be applied to comply with local health authority regulations and requirements. See **Figure 1**.

Note: Where tiles are chosen, it may be necessary to lay them on ceramic tile sheeting because tile adhesive may not adhere to fire-resistant board. The tile sheeting is additional to, not instead of, fire resistant material.

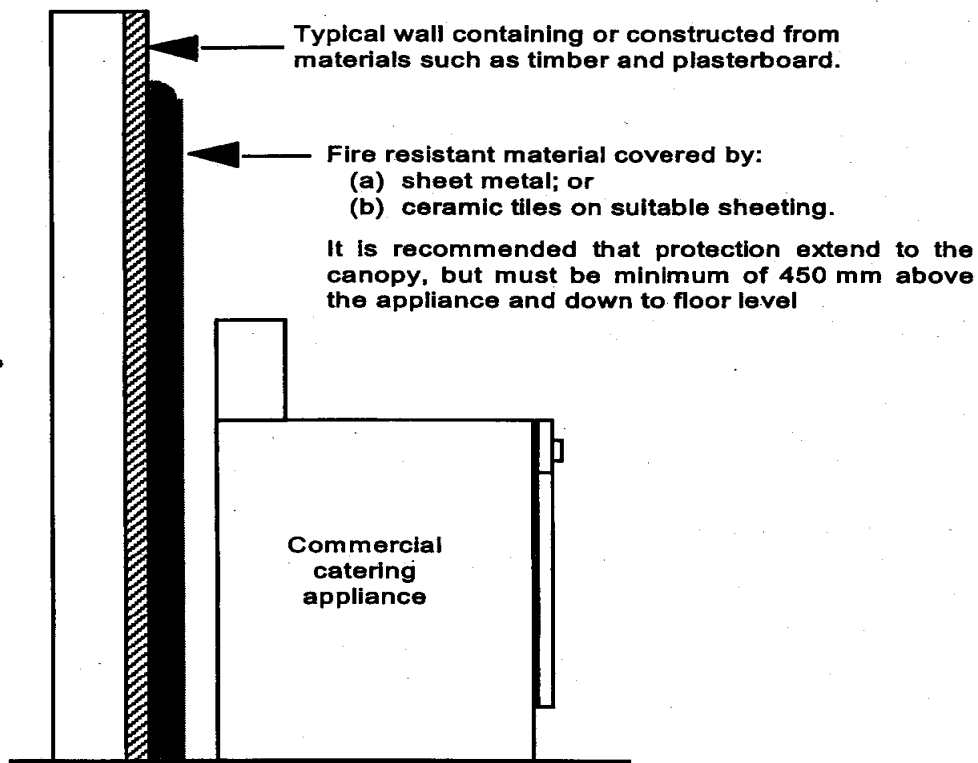


Figure 1
Example of protecting a combustible wall

If further information is required, please contact Gas Standards and Safety on 1300 366 322

Gas Standards and Safety wish to acknowledge the information provided by the Victorian Office of Gas Safety to assist in the preparation of this Information Sheet.