



Catering Equipment Hard Water Guide

How to keep your equipment running longer in a hard water area.

What limescale does to your equipment

Hard water is full of dissolved minerals. Heat forces them out as hard, chalky limescale, starting from around 35 to 40°C. It coats the parts doing the work, the elements, boilers, jets and nozzles, so they can't do their job properly. That means:

Higher bills

Scale acts like a blanket on the element. Just 1mm adds around 7% to energy use (Carbon Trust), and it climbs from there.

Earlier breakdowns

Scaled-up parts overheat and strain, so they wear out and fail sooner, often years early.

Warranty risk

Makers put water quality on you. Limescale damage can be refused, even on a four-figure combi repair.

Care routine

When	What to do
Every day	Empty and clean your warewasher filters. Wipe down interiors. Run any self-clean cycle on the combi. Empty drip trays and check water inlets aren't blocked.
Every week	Top up the salt in your warewasher's softener if it has one (about a pint). Clean the spray arms and jets so water still gets through. Check trays and door seals.
Every month	Descale the dishwasher and the combi (see steps below). Check heating elements for chalky buildup and clear it before it hardens on. Replace the combi water filter if one's fitted.
Every 6–12 months the pro jobs	Book a professional service and deep clean to reach the scale you can't. Ice machines want a full clean roughly every 6 months, with a quick look every few weeks in between.

Descale a warewasher in 4 steps

- 1 Add descaler once the machine has filled and heated up.
- 2 Leave it to sit for about 5 minutes.
- 3 Run 2–3 empty cycles to clear the jets and element.
- 4 Flush through with clean water before you wash anything.

Always use the descaler your machine's maker recommends, and follow the manual. The same idea works for combis using their own descaling programme.

Warning signs to watch for

- ! Cloudy or spotted glasses out of the washer
- ! Ice that's soft, cloudy or smaller than usual
- ! Equipment slower to heat than it used to be
- ! Weak steam or uneven cooking in the combi
- ! White, chalky deposits round elements and jets
- ! Energy bills creeping up for no clear reason
- ! More little faults and call-outs than usual

The golden rule: you can't change your water, but a few minutes of care a week keeps scale from ever getting a grip, and keeps your warranty valid. Prevention is far cheaper than a new boiler.