



Press Release

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PERIODIC REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE HEALTH INSPECTORATE SERVICES WITHIN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIRECTORATE

The Environmental Health Directorate within the Superintendence of Public Health is making every effort to keep its contact with the public through a monthly press statement. The following is a summary of actions taken during September, 2012.

SUMMARISED REPORT

The following is a summary of the report hereunder:

- 377 improvement notices were issued during last month;
- 10 outlets visited in the early morning
- 14 undertakings were issued;
- 774kg of foodstuffs were destroyed;
- 7 Legionella audits carried out;
- 19 swimming pools were audited during 7 audits;
- 4 schools inspected;
- 8 abatement notices issued;
- 27 food consignments imported were inspected;
- 1990 notification for importing/trading food into Malta;
- 18 Ship Sanitation certificates issued;
- 85 applications were processed;
- 1970 control cards for narcotics and psychotropic substances were issued;
- 48 illegal tobacco related adverts and 3 illegal tattoo adverts were removed;
- 616 samples were elevated and analysed;
- 13 citations issued/processed;
- 6 Emergency control orders issued;
- 711 complaints lodged with the Health Inspectorate.
- €1432 in fines 155 months of conditional discharges imposed.

DETAILED REPORT

IMPROVEMENT NOTICES ISSUED TO FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS

Three hundred and seventy seven improvement notices in terms of article 33 of the Food Safety Act have been issued to food business operators by the Health Inspectorate Services.

This notice is sent to all food business operators following an unannounced inspection by Environmental Health Officers within their establishment. The intention of this notice is to inform

Attachments: None

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food operators about deficiencies noted in their establishments while the operator is given a specific deadline by when the deficiencies need to be remedied. Though the seriousness of deficiencies might vary, legal action is initiated when major deficiencies are noted.

EARLY MORNING INSPECTIONS

Ten outlets were also visited by the Health Inspectorate early in the morning as part of a monitoring programme to ascertain hygienic delivery of food in particular dairy products and bread.

UNDERTAKINGS

During September, **fourteen undertakings** were entered into by the Health Inspectorate, all of which were food related and concerned hygiene of food premises, HACCP and on improperly labelled food.

Undertakings are legal agreements between the operators and the Health Authority specifying deadlines by which deficiencies in their premises should be remedied in compliance with standing legislation. Failure to abide with the agreed deadlines results in Court proceedings being initiated.

DESTRUCTION OF FOOD

During September, **774kg of different foodstuffs** were destroyed by the Health Inspectorate, ranging from:

- 480kg shrimps and 6.4kg savouries and sweets with elapsed Date of Minimum Durability;
- 264kg meat products without proper traceability records and improper storage;
- 23kg herbs and pickled vegetables without proper labelling

RECALLS AND OTHER MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

Throughout last month, no food products were implicated in withdrawals/warnings issued by this Directorate. However five media communications were issued, as follows:

1. Four of which were related to bathing water:
 - a. press release 1919 issued on 6th September;
 - b. press release 1953 issued on 10th September;
 - c. press release 1965 issued on 11th September;
 - d. press release 2016 issued on 16th September.
2. Press Release 1994 issued on 13th September regarding the hazards from cigarette additives

LEGIONELLA AUDITS AND POOL INSPECTIONS

Seven audits at Hotels, and other similar premises to ascertain compliance with Control of Legionella Regulations, 2006 (L.N. 5 of 2006) and the Registration of Cooling Towers and Evaporative Condensers Regulations, 2006 (L.N. 6 of 2006) were performed by the Health Inspectorate during last month.

During the same month, **nineteen swimming pools** were inspected during **seven audits** carried out by the Health Inspectorate to verify compliance with Swimming Pools Regulations, 2005 (L.N. 129 of 2005). **One** pool was registered with the Health Authority during this month. This regulation specifies that all swimming pools with the exception of those situated at a single family residence need to register with this Directorate. A list of registered pools can be found in the Directorate's website mentioned below.

One new cooling tower was also registered during last month.

INSPECTIONS OF SCHOOLS

During September, **four schools** were inspected to ensure compliance with general hygiene requirements. Such inspections are carried out in private, government or church owned schools and whether, primary, secondary, tertiary or language or special schools.

ABATEMENT NOTICES

Eight abatement notices were issued during this month by the Health Inspectorate in terms of the Public Health Act in view of inspections and audits carried out in the previous days.

CONSIGNMENTS

Twenty seven consignments of food imported/traded into Malta were also inspected during September by Environmental Health Officers attached with the Port Health Services within this Directorate.

CONSIGNMENTS DOCUMENTARY CHECKS

1,990 requests for importation/trading of foodstuffs were submitted to the Port Health Services as required by Trading Regulations of 2004 (Legal Notice 315 of 2004 which can be downloaded from <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=11120&l=1>).

All traders of food including food contact materials and food supplements are reminded to notify the Port Health Services, 48hours in advance as explained in Press Release 1531 issued on 13th August, 2011 (URL: http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press_releases/2011/08/pr1531.pdf).

SHIP SANITATION CERTIFICATES

During September, **eighteen** Ship Sanitation Certificates were issued by the Port Health Services. Such inspections are carried out in terms of the International Health Regulations of 2005 and involves the assessment of the general hygienic conditions and control measures undertaken on ships. Such certificate needs to be renewed every 6 months at an authorised port; Malta being an authorised port.

APPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

During September, the Health Inspectorate received **85 requests to process applications** to operate food and non-food business. Prospective operators who wish to open such businesses are obliged to apply for a permit with the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) and then apply for the actual licence with the competent authority such as the Trade Licensing Unit or Malta Tourism Authority. At every stage, this Directorate is consulted in order to verify suitability of proposed premises.

During the same month, Environmental Health Officers deployed with the Food Safety Unit, which is involved in the licensing of food related business carried out a total of **87 visits** and **three consultations**.

CONTROL CARDS FOR NARCOTIC AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES

During September, **1970 control cards for narcotic and psychotropic substances** (1258 females and 712 males) were issued by the Drug Control Unit, which is another unit falling under the Health Inspectorate Services. **174 of these cards** were **new applicants**.

These cards are issued when a medical doctor deems that a person needs to be prescribed a psychotropic drug. An application form is filled in and handed over to the patient which is in turn submitted to the Drug Control Unit, Shop 12, City Gate, Valletta Tel; 21245490.

ILLEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS

During September, **48 adverts** involving Tobacco products and including electronic cigarettes in breach of Tobacco (Smoking Control) Act were noticed on local sites and the respective advertisers and webmasters were instructed to remove, something which was actually complied with.

Three adverts of tattoo equipment were also noticed in contravention of the Control of Tattooing Act.

SAMPLES

During September, **616 samples** were elevated by the Health Inspectorate and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory for analysis and/or examination for several parameters;

- 90 food samples,
- 48 potable water samples,
- 24 swabs,
- 83 infiltration water samples,
- 13 pool water samples,
- 311 sea water samples,
- 28 other samples.

During this year, the Directorate has launched 18 microbiological sampling programmes and 37 chemical sampling programmes targeting several parameters in numerous categories of foodstuffs such as colours, aflatoxins, GMOs, radionucleides, etc.

BATHING WATER MONITORING PROGRAMME

During the month of September, **311 samples of sea water** were collected and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory to be analysed for microbiological parameters as stipulated by EU Directive 2006/7/EC. The bathing water monitoring programme is carried out in accordance with the provisions of said EU Directive. The official bathing season started on the 14th May 2012 and will last till the 21st October 2012. Sampling is carried out from 87 official bathing sites throughout the Maltese islands.

Up to the 20th week of the monitoring programme the 87 sites have been classified as follows: 84 sites as Excellent Quality, 3 sites as Good Quality, and **no** sites as Sufficient or Poor Quality.

CONTRAVENTIONS

During this month, **thirteen contraventions** were issued/processed by the Health Inspectorate, **twelve** of which were related to food safety issues:

- The operators of two separate catering establishments for operating in unhygienic conditions amongst several structural deficiencies
- Owner of a garage for using said premises without being registered for such purpose and for several hygienic non-conformities;
- One retailer for operating in unhygienic conditions amongst several structural deficiencies
- One retailer for selling foodstuffs without durability date and food which was unfit for human consumption due to the presence of foreign objects;

- Another retailer for selling foodstuffs which was unfit for human consumption due to the presence of foreign objects;
- One catering establishment for using water for human consumption the supplier of whom was not registered with the Health Authority;
- Another retailer for selling foodstuffs without proper labelling;
- Two food business operators for not complying with an undertaking;
- One retailer for keeping frozen chicken at improper temperatures;
- One retailer for failing to provide traceability records;

One Bakery was also taken to court for causing nuisance to neighbours.

EMERGENCY CONTROL ORDERS

During September, **six** emergency control orders were issued as follows:

- An owner of some fields had to be stopped from using crops in his field due to a sewage overflow;
- Two operators for using unregistered boreholes and one food business operator for accepting such water for potable use;
- One retailer was withheld from supplying meat to other retailers.

EMERGENCY PROHIBITION ORDERS

During September, **no** emergency prohibition orders were issued and hence no premises were closed down.

COMPLAINTS

In September, **711 complaints** were lodged with the Directorate which were categorised in one or more category, as follows:

- **Food related complaints**

83 complaints were related to food. The most common type of food complaints concerned hygiene of food premises (18 complaints), risk of contamination (14 complaints), fitness of food (12 complaints), and improper labeling (8 complaints).

- **Other Environmental Health related complaints**

Another 707 complaints were environmental health related. The most common type concerned presence of pests (229 complaints), infiltrations (114 complaints), accumulations of refuse (63 complaints), drainage overflow (42 complaints), foul smells (43 complaints) and keeping of animals in unhygienic conditions (42 complaints)

Note: The number of complaints and the number of categories do not tally, since one complaint received may encompass one or more categories.

FROM THE LAW COURTS

During the last three months, **thirty eight** cases (out of 186 cases) were decided by the Magistrate's Court during **5** Health Sittings held.

From the cases heard in the last quarter, those found guilty were given conditional discharges ranging from **1 month to 24 months** and to fines, the total of which amounted to **€932**. The fines were imposed on:

- Godwins Garage (Ice), Tal-Balal Rd, Iklın was fined €465 for failure to abide with undertaking carried out in 2010; and
- Da Rosita, Triq Il-Hallel, Bugibba was fined €467 for failure to abide with undertaking carried out last year;

In addition during the second quarter Bunch of Roses, 38 Triq iż-Żinzel, Qormi was fined **€500** for failure to abide with undertaking back in 2007.

The following were given conditional discharges for a stipulated period:

24 months

- Stivala Wholesalers Caterers Company Limited, Triq L-Ursolini, Pieta' for removing sealed food products without permission by the Health Authority back in 2011;

12 months

- Two traders of World Water Fisheries, Garage 13, Quarry No 10, Triq Tal-Balal, Gharghur for failure to notify food consignments of animal origin for human consumption in October, 2011.
- Trader of vehicle KBJ 654 for failing to notify a food consignment also in 2011;
- Operator of Bakery, No.83, Triq Dun Mario, Qormi for failure to register the premises, food handler was not registered with the Food Safety Commission, several structural deficiencies and for failure to comply with the HACCP requirements in 2005;
- Operators of SISA Supermarkets, in Amery Street, Sliema, Gudja Road, Santa Lucija and Spinola Bay, St Julians for several structural deficiencies, for failing to register the premises, removing sealed food products without permission by the Health Authority, exposing food to risk of contamination, improper labeling, misleading labeling, lapsed durability date, producing meat products without the SPH license, on several occasions in 2005
- Operator of Tangra Wine, Bar and Wine Bar, Triq Il-Gifen, Bugibba for exposing food to risk of contamination, food handlers not registered with the Food Safety Commission and for failure to register the premises in 2007;
- Operator of Turkish Mini Market, Sant Anna, Triq Il-Punent, Msida for failure to register the premises and for not notifying a food consignment in 2011.

9 months

- Operator of Meet D Best, Triq Il-Gostra l/o Swatar for producing meat products without the licence and for not having an adequate traceability system on February, 2012.

8 months

- Operator of Vehicle FEB 296, at Triq Xatt l-Ghassara tal-Gheneb and at Triq It-Tigrija l-Marsa for failure to have temperature control facilities and risk of contamination while transporting fresh rabbits in October 2011;

- Operator of Charles Butcher, 74, Misraħ Santu Rokku, Għaxaq for exposing food to risk of contamination, having food products improperly labelled and for having food products without an adequate traceability system in January 2012;

6 months

- Operator of Tower Supermarket, High Street, Sliema for having food products with lapsed use-by-date in November 2011;

3 months

- Operator of Carmel Sant, Garage No 8, Triq Carmelo De Lucca, Qawra for removing sealed food products without permission by the Health Authority in 2006;
- Operator of Regent, Triq Il-Mosta, San Pawl Il-Baħar for having food with misleading durability dates back in 2008;
- Owner of Agenzija Farm, Tal-Għallis, Magħtab for keeping accumulations of manure and exercise yards irregularly drained also in 2008;
- Owner of No 30, Ave Maria, Grazia House, Isourd Street, St Paul's Bay for having accumulations of rubbish in 2005;
- Hawker in Zurrieq Open Market Vehicle No LAF 571 for selling open food without washing facilities and for exposing refrigerated food products to risk of contamination in November 2011.

1 month

- Barlovento, Tower Street, San Lawrenz, Gozo for failing to register the premises in May, 2008

The Environmental Health Directorate takes this opportunity to remind the public that it can contact the Health Inspectorate Services between 7:00am and 3:00pm on telephone number 21337333, by calling personally at its offices at Continental Business Centre, Cutrico Buildings, Old Railway Track, Santa Venera or by email complaints.ph@gov.mt.

For further information, the public is also encouraged to visit the Directorate's website at URL: https://ehealth.gov.mt/HealthPortal/public_health/environmental-health/department_for_env_health.aspx or on its facebook page on <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Environmental-Health-Directorate-Malta/145027878928626>