



Press Release

PR 2433

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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 October, 2012.

SUMMARISED REPORT

The following is a summary of the report hereunder:

- 456 improvement notices were issued during last month;
- 3 HACCP audits were carried out;
- 15 undertakings were issued;
- 506kg of foodstuffs and food contact materials were destroyed;
- 1 product was recalled
- 19 Legionella audits carried out;
- 19 swimming pools were audited during 8 audits;
- 4 pools were registered;
- 4 schools inspected;
- No abatement notices issued;
- 41 food consignments imported were inspected;
- 2151 notification for importing/trading food into Malta;
- 26 Ship Sanitation certificates issued;
- 110 applications were processed;
- 2419 control cards for narcotics and psychotropic substances were issued;
- 35 illegal tobacco related adverts and 3 illegal tattoo adverts were removed;
- 826 samples were elevated and analysed;
- 9 citations issued/processed;
- 2 Emergency control orders issued; and
- 740 complaints lodged with the Health Inspectorate.

DETAILED REPORT

IMPROVEMENT NOTICES ISSUED TO FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS

Four hundred and fifty six 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.

HACCP AUDITS

Three HACCP audits were carried out during October. The **Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point** is a Food Safety Management System which is obligatory in all food businesses.

UNDERTAKINGS

During October, **sixteen 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 October, **506kg of different foodstuffs and food contact materials** were destroyed by the Health Inspectorate, ranging from:

- 315kg of frozen drumsticks due to an issue with their durability date;
- 120kg of plastic bags for food use without proper certification;
- 55kg of meat and meat products due to lack of traceability;
- 9.8kg of sausages due to labelling irregularities; and
- 6kg of food ingredients following a rapid alert;

RECALLS AND OTHER MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

Throughout last month, one food products was implicated in withdrawals/warnings issued by this Directorate as follows:

- Press Release 2263 issued on 16th October 2012 (URL: <https://ehealth.gov.mt/download.aspx?id=8420>) regarding recall of plastic forks

During the same month another **two** media communications were issued, as follows:

1. Press Release 2153 issued on 3rd October, 2012 regarding graves at Santa Marija Addolorata Cemetery (URL: <https://ehealth.gov.mt/download.aspx?id=8390>)
2. Press Release 2235 issued on 12th October, 2012 regarding works at Santa Marija Addolorata Cemetery (URL: <https://ehealth.gov.mt/download.aspx?id=8393>)

LEGIONELLA AUDITS AND POOL INSPECTIONS

Nineteen 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 **eight audits** carried out by the Health Inspectorate to verify compliance with Swimming Pools Regulations, 2005 (L.N. 129 of 2005). **Four** pools were 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.

INSPECTIONS OF SCHOOLS

During October, **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

No 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

Forty-one consignments of food imported/traded into Malta were also inspected during October by Environmental Health Officers attached with the Port Health Services within this Directorate.

CONSIGNMENTS DOCUMENTARY CHECKS

2,151 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 October, **twenty-six** 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 October, the Health Inspectorate received **110 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 **118 visits** and no consultations.

CONTROL CARDS FOR NARCOTIC AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES

During October, **2419 control cards for narcotic and psychotropic substances** (1541 females and 878 males) were issued by the Drug Control Unit, which is another unit falling under the Health Inspectorate Services. **219 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 October, **35 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.

One advert of tattoo equipment was also noticed in contravention of the Control of Tattooing Act.

SAMPLES

During October, **826 samples** were elevated by the Health Inspectorate and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory for analysis and/or examination for several parameters;

- 208 food samples,
- 186 potable water samples,
- 47 swabs,
- 99 infiltration water samples,
- 7 pool water samples,
- 239 sea water samples,
- 40 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 October, **239 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 has now ended on 21st October 2012. Sampling is carried out from 87 official bathing sites throughout the Maltese islands.

At the end of the official bathing season following 23 weeks of the monitoring, 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, **nine contraventions** were issued/processed by the Health Inspectorate, **seven** of which were related to food safety issues:

- One establishment and one supplier for providing table water which was not an approved supply;
- One borehole owner for not abiding with an Emergency Control Order issued beforehand;
- One hawker for selling foodstuffs without a proper label, for exposing food to risk of contamination, for failing to provide a water supply, and for having unsuitable equipment ;

- One bakery for exposing food to risk of contamination, keeping prohibited wood, and for failing to keep equipment clean;
- One producer for breaching an Emergency Prohibition Order issued beforehand and for removing foodstuffs that were previously sealed by the Health Authority; and
- One retailer for not adhering with licence conditions.

During the same period **two** citations were environmental health related, as follows:

- One residence for failing to keep roof clean;
- A resident for not permitting the Health Officials to carry out an inspection and failed to abide orders;

EMERGENCY CONTROL ORDERS

During October, **two** emergency control orders were issued as follows:

- One butcher for preparing foodstuffs without the necessary permission; and
- One residence was stopped preparing foodstuffs for commercial purposes

EMERGENCY PROHIBITION ORDERS

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

COMPLAINTS

In October, **740 complaints** were lodged with the Directorate which were categorised in one or more category, as follows:

- **Food related complaints**

71 complaints were related to food. The most common type of food complaints concerned hygiene of food premises (15 complaints), improper labelling (10 complaints), fitness of food (8 complaints), and premises not according to license conditions with (8 complaints).

- **Other Environmental Health related complaints**

Another 673 complaints were environmental health related. The most common type concerned presence of pests (204 complaints), infiltrations (112 complaints), accumulations of refuse (63 complaints), drainage overflow (42 complaints), discharge of foul water (39 complaints) and drainage overflow (33 complaints)

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

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>