



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 November, 2012.

SUMMARISED REPORT

The following is a summary of the report hereunder:

- 613 improvement notices were issued during last month;
- 3 HACCP audits were carried out;
- 7 undertakings were issued;
- 152kg of foodstuffs and food contact materials were destroyed;
- 3 products were recalled
- 21 Legionella audits carried out;
- 36 swimming pools were audited during 9 audits;
- 11 pools were registered;
- 60 schools inspected;
- 37 abatement notices issued;
- 34 food consignments imported were inspected;
- 2302 notification for importing/trading food into Malta;
- 18 Ship Sanitation certificates issued;
- 71 applications were processed;
- 1583 control cards for narcotics and psychotropic substances were issued;
- 13 illegal tobacco related adverts and 1 illegal tattoo adverts were removed;
- 197 samples were elevated and analysed;
- 5 citations issued/processed;
- 5 Emergency control orders issued;
- 1 Premises closed down and
- 235 complaints lodged with the Health Inspectorate.

DETAILED REPORT

IMPROVEMENT NOTICES ISSUED TO FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS

Six hundred and thirteen 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 November. The **Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point** is a Food Safety Management System which is obligatory in all food businesses.

UNDERTAKINGS

During November, **seven undertakings** were entered into by the Health Inspectorate, four were food related and concerned hygiene of food premises, HACCP and on improperly labelled food. Three were public health related and involved Legionella control and pool safety.

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 November, **152kg of different foodstuffs** were destroyed by the Health Inspectorate, ranging from:

- 124kg of chicken and 23.5litres of sauces due to risk of contamination; and
- 4.5l of wine due to improper labelling

RECALLS AND OTHER MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

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

- Press Release 2464 issued on 9th November, 2012 (URL: <https://gov.mt/en/Government/Press%20Releases/Pages/2012/November/09/pr2464.aspx>)

LEGIONELLA AUDITS AND POOL INSPECTIONS

Twenty-one 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, **thirty-six swimming pools** were inspected during **nine audits** carried out by the Health Inspectorate to verify compliance with Swimming Pools Regulations, 2005 (L.N. 129 of 2005). **Eleven** 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 November, **sixty 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

Twenty-seven 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

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

CONSIGNMENTS DOCUMENTARY CHECKS

2,302 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 November, **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 November, the Health Inspectorate received **71 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 **54** and no consultations.

CONTROL CARDS FOR NARCOTIC AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES

During November, **1583 control cards for narcotic and psychotropic substances** (1016 females and 567 males) were issued by the Drug Control Unit, which is another unit falling under the Health Inspectorate Services. **198 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 November, **13 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 November, **197 samples** were elevated by the Health Inspectorate and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory for analysis and/or examination for several parameters;

- 71 food samples,
- 69 potable water samples,
- 18 swabs,
- 32 infiltration water samples,
- 7 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.

CONTRAVENTIONS

During last month, **five contraventions** were issued/processed by the Health Inspectorate, **all** of which were related to food safety issues:

- One trader for allegedly destroying foodstuffs that was sealed by the Health Authority and for trading food which was not in compliance with regulations;
- One kiosk for failing to adhere to hygiene rules, such as provision of washing facilities, and exposing food to risk of contamination;
- One Hotel operator and one water distributor for making use of an unregistered water supply;
- One trader for not abiding with an undertaking entered into with the Health Authority some time before;

EMERGENCY CONTROL ORDERS

During November, **five** emergency control orders were issued as follows:

- One bakery for the illegal processing of food;
- Three butchers for processing foodstuffs without the necessary approvals from the Health Authority; and
- One Hotel for using an unregistered water supply.

EMERGENCY PROHIBITION ORDERS

During November, **one emergency prohibition order** was issued and hence the following premises were closed down:

- Wok to Walk, 134, The Strand, Gzira due to imminent risk to public health.

Remedial action was taken and premises were allowed to reopen some days later.

COMPLAINTS

In November, **235 complaints** were lodged with the Directorate which were categorised in one or more category, as follows:

- **Food related complaints**

35 complaints were related to food. The most common type of food complaints concerned hygiene of food premises (8 complaints), improper labelling (5 complaints), fitness of food (4 complaints), and premises not according to license conditions with (4 complaints).

- **Other Environmental Health related complaints**

Another 231 complaints were environmental health related. The most common type concerned presence of pests (72 complaints), infiltrations (40 complaints), accumulations of refuse (15 complaints), and foul smells (18 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>