



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 regular press statement. The following is a summary of actions taken during **SEPTEMBER, 2013**.

SUMMARISED REPORT

The following is a summary of the report hereunder:

- **463** improvement notices were issued;
- **4** undertakings were issued;
- **16.91kg** of foodstuffs were destroyed;
- **6** Legionella audits carried out;
- **8** swimming pools were audited during **8** audits;
- **1** school inspected;
- **5** abatement notices issued;
- **36** consignments of imported food were inspected;
- **1951** notifications of foodstuffs, **155** import declarations of foodstuffs and **1026** notification/import declarations of food supplements were received;
- **1522** personal parcels checked of which **2** were rejected;
- **26** Ship Sanitation certificates were issued;
- **97** applications were processed;
- **1962** control cards for narcotics and psychotropic substances were issued;
- **5** illegal tobacco related adverts and **4** illegal tattoo adverts were removed;
- **850** samples were elevated and analysed;
- **No** products were recalled;
- **9** citations issued/processed;
- **567** complaints were lodged with the Health Inspectorate.
- **200** inspections in food premises in connection with smoking in public places were made.

DETAILED REPORT

IMPROVEMENT NOTICES ISSUED TO FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS

Four hundred and sixty-three improvement notices in terms of article 33 of the Food Safety Act were issued to food business operators by the Health Inspectorate Services. During this period **24 improvement notices** were also issued to open market stalls.

Attachments: None

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An improvement 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 food operators about deficiencies noted in their establishments while the operator is given a specific deadline in order to rectify these deficiencies. Though the seriousness of deficiencies might vary, legal action is initiated when major deficiencies are noted.

HACCP AUDITS

2 HACCP audits were carried out. The **Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point** is a Food Safety Management System which is obligatory in those food businesses providing high risk foods.

UNDERTAKINGS

4 undertakings were entered into by the Health Inspectorate, and concerned several food and environmental health related issues.

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

The amount of **foodstuffs** destroyed by the Health Inspectorate was **16.91kgs**.

These foodstuffs included:

- Meat – 5.10kg
- Fish – 11.81kg

LEGIONELLA AUDITS AND POOL INSPECTIONS

Six 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.

Eight 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). **10 new 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

1 school was 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

5 abatement notices were issued 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 six consignments of food imported/traded into Malta were also inspected by Environmental Health Officers attached with the Port Health Services within this Directorate.

CONSIGNMENTS DOCUMENTARY CHECKS

1951 notifications of foodstuffs, 155 import declarations of foodstuffs and 1026 requests for importation of food supplements 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).

PERSONAL IMPORTS

1522 personal consignments were also screened by the Port Health Services, of which **2 were rejected**.

SHIP SANITATION CERTIFICATES

Twenty-six Ship Sanitation Certificates were issued by the Port Health Services. These inspections are carried out in terms of the International Health Regulations of 2005 and involve the assessment of the general hygienic conditions and control measures undertaken on ships. A Ship Sanitation Certificate needs to be renewed every 6 months at an authorised port; Malta being an authorised port.

APPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

The Health Inspectorate received **97 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.

CONTROL CARDS FOR NARCOTIC AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES

1962 control cards for narcotic and psychotropic substances (745 males and 1217 females) were issued by the Drug Control Unit, which is another unit falling under the Health Inspectorate Services. **194 of these cards were new applications**.

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

5 adverts involving Tobacco products in breach of Tobacco (Smoking Control) Act was noticed and the respective advertiser was instructed to remove such advert - something which was actually complied with.

4 adverts of tattoo equipment were also noted to be in contravention of the Control of Tattooing Act.

SAMPLES

850 samples were elevated by the Health Inspectorate and submitted to the Public Health Laboratory for analysis and/or examination for several parameters.

BATHING WATER MONITORING PROGRAMME

During the month of September, **318 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 13th May 2013 and will last till the 20th October 2013. 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: 87 sites as Excellent Quality, **no** sites as Good, Sufficient or Poor Quality.

RECALLS

No products were recalled in September

CONTRAVENTIONS

Nine contraventions were issued / processed by the Health Inspectorate, **one** of which was related to food safety issues:

- Two persons responsible for a food outlet were charged for:
 - Keeping food in a risk of contamination;
 - Failing to keep a HACCP system within the food outlet;
 - Failing to provide pest control measures;
 - Failing to provide an adequate wash hand basin;
 - Failing to provide facilities for personal clothing of staff;
 - Failing to keep a traceable system;
 - Failing to register a food outlet with the competent authority.

Eight were environmental health related:

- Two persons were charged separately for allowing smoking inside two separate public places;
- Two persons were charged separately for smoking inside two separate public places. One of these persons was also charged for obstructing a public officer during the carrying out of his duties and also for failing to give the requested information;
- Two persons were charged separately for the advertising of tobacco products;
- One person was charged for obstructing a public officer during the carrying out of his duties;
- One person was charged for letting foul water to flow into the street.

FROM THE LAW COURTS (3rd Quarter)

During the last three months, **5 cases** (out of **34 cases**) were decided by the Magistrate's Court during Health Sittings held. From these cases, **12** were new whilst the remaining 8 were brought forward from other months/years. 4 of the new cases have been decided upon.

From the cases heard in the last quarter, those found guilty were given conditional discharges ranging from **3 months to 6 months**.

The following were given conditional discharges for a stipulated period:

6 months

Montekristo Beverages (Winery), Triq Hal-Farrug, Luqa for not abiding with an undertaking entered into on 12th October, 2012.

3 months

Buttigieg Holdings Ltd. Papillon Caterers, Buttigieg Holdings Ltd, Triq il-Handaq, Qormi for not keeping the equipment, walls and floor in a good condition, inadequate pest control, no proper HACCP documentation, no proper cleaning, not having a waste receptacle and for not having the working tops in a good condition on 10th April, 2013.

EMERGENCY CONTROL ORDERS

One Emergency Control Order was issued against one person.

EMERGENCY PROHIBITION ORDERS

No Emergency Prohibition Orders were issued in September.

ENFORCEMENT NOTICES

An enforcement notice was issued on the 13th September against a hotel operator following the risk of infection from Legionnaire's Disease. The notice was withdrawn on the 30th, following necessary works carried out to remedy situation.

COMPLAINTS

567 complaints were lodged with the Directorate which were categorised in one or more category, as follows:

o **Food related complaints**

110 complaints were related to food. The most common type of food related complaints were: improper labelling (29 complaints), hygiene of food premises (19 complaints), risk of contamination (13 complains) and fitness of food (11 complaints).

o **Other Environmental Health related complaints**

Another **518** complaints were environmental health related. The most common complaints were: pest infestations (120 complaints), infiltrations (103 complaints), accumulation of refuse (44 complaints), drainage overflow (38 complaints), leaky/defective drains (27 complaints) and keeping of animals in unhygieic conditions (20 complaints).

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

TOBACCO SURVEILLANCE

200 inspections were carried out in food premises in connection with tobacco surveillance. No persons were charged following these inspections.

FOCUS REPORTS

The September focus report was titled ‘**A focus on the History of the Health Inspectorate in Malta**’. This will be uploaded on the EHD’s website at URL: https://ehealth.gov.mt/HealthPortal/public_health/environmental-health/publications/publications.aspx .

CHANGE IN ADDRESS

This month, the **Food Safety Unit** moved its offices from ‘The Annexe’, No. 34, Triq Antonio Nani, Ta’ Xbiex to ‘Continental Business Centre’, Old Railway Track, Santa Venera.

The Environmental Health Directorate takes this opportunity to remind the public that it can contact the Health Inspectorate Services between 08:00am and 3:00pm on telephone number 21337333, by calling personally at its offices at Continental Business Centre, 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>

The information provided in this report has been compiled by the staff at the Environmental Health Directorate on the basis of information received by the Directorate. The figures used in this report are provided for informational purposes only and are subject to revision. The author and the Environmental Health Directorate are not liable for any mistakes, errors or omissions in this report.