



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 **OCTOBER**, 2013.

SUMMARISED REPORT

The following is a summary of the report hereunder:

- **490** improvement notices were issued;
- **21** undertakings were issued;
- **113.36kg** of foodstuffs were destroyed;
- **11** Legionella audits carried out;
- **25** swimming pools were audited during **8** audits;
- **8** schools inspected;
- **10** abatement notices issued;
- **41** consignments of imported food were inspected;
- **1842** notifications of foodstuffs, **177** import declarations of foodstuffs and **363** notification/import declarations of food supplements were received;
- **1701** personal parcels checked of which **6** were rejected;
- **28** Ship Sanitation certificates were issued;
- **152** applications were processed;
- **2713** control cards for narcotics and psychotropic substances were issued;
- **3** illegal tobacco related adverts and **2** illegal tattoo adverts were removed;
- **687** samples were elevated and analysed;
- One food product and one food supplement were recalled;
- **11** citations issued/processed;
- **587** complaints were lodged with the Health Inspectorate.
- **192** 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 ninty 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 **no improvement notices** were issued to open market stalls.

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

5 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

21 undertakings (20 in terms of the Food Safety Act and 1 in terms of the Public Health Act) 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 **113.36kgs**.

These foodstuffs included:

- Chicken – 10kg
- Canned food – 21.86kg
- Biscuits – 80kg
- Food preparation enzyme – 1.5kgs

LEGIONELLA AUDITS AND POOL INSPECTIONS

Eleven 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.

Twenty five 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). **1 new 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.

INSPECTIONS OF SCHOOLS

8 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

10 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

Forty one 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

1842 notifications of foodstuffs, 177 import declarations of foodstuffs and 363 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

1701 personal consignments were also screened by the Port Health Services, of which **6 were rejected**.

SHIP SANITATION CERTIFICATES

Twenty-eight 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 **152 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

2713 control cards for narcotic and psychotropic substances (1022 males and 1691 females) were issued by the Drug Control Unit, which is another unit falling under the Health Inspectorate Services. **184 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

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

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

SAMPLES

687 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 October, **253 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 has ended on the 20th October 2013. Sampling was carried out from 87 official bathing sites throughout the Maltese islands.

Up to the 23rd week of the monitoring programme (end of programme) the 87 sites have been classified as follows: 87 sites as Excellent Quality, **no** sites as Good, Sufficient or Poor Quality

RECALLS

One food product and one food supplement were recalled in October as follows:

Press Release number 2204 issued on 9th October, 2013 (URL: <http://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Press%20Releases/Pages/2013/October/09/pr2204.aspx>).

Press Release number 2268 issued on 16th October, 2013 (URL: <http://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Press%20Releases/Pages/2013/October/16/pr2268.aspx>).

CONTRAVENTIONS

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

- One person was charged for failing to abide with an abatement notice.
- One person was charged for offering food for sale which was unfit.
- One person was charged for offering for sale food which had a misleading label, for having no traceability and for keeping a food business without the necessary license.
- One person was charged for offering for sale food which had a misleading label.
- One person was charged for keeping food in a risk of contamination, for not providing a suitable wash hand basin and for not providing a suitable sink for the washing of equipment.
- One person was charged for keeping equipment which comes in contact with food in risk of contamination; failing to keep the food premises clean; for exposing food to risk of contamination and for operating a food business without the necessary license.
- One person was charged for not abiding with an undertaking.
- One person was charged for failing to keep the place used for the preparation of food clean and for not wearing suitable clothing during food preparation.
- One person was charged for operating a food business from unlicensed premises and for failing to register as a food handler.

Two were environmental health related:

- Two persons were charged separately for keeping drain pipes in a bad state of repair. One of these persons was also charged for obstructing the Environmental Health Officer during his work.

EMERGENCY CONTROL ORDERS

Three Emergency Control Orders were issued against three persons.

EMERGENCY PROHIBITION ORDERS

During last month, the following premise was closed down by the Health Authority.

- Djamant Store, St. John Street, Siggiewi

Remedial action was taken by the operators and hence premise was allowed to reopen 2 days later.

COMPLAINTS

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

o Food related complaints

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

o Other Environmental Health related complaints

Another **495** complaints were environmental health related. The most common complaints were: pest infestations (179 complaints), infiltrations (65 complaints), accumulation of refuse (45 complaints), discharge of foul water (40 complaints), keeping of animals in unhygienic conditions (33 complaints), and leaky/defective drains (26 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

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

FOCUS REPORTS

The October focus report is titled '**A focus on the effects of tobacco on health**'. This will be uploaded on the EHD's website at URL: https://ehealth.gov.mt/HealthPortal/public_health/environmental-health/publications/publications.aspx.

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>