
Update on Prior Years' Report Items

2002 Recommendation

The Department should ensure that management monitors all aspects of inspection activity and that information used for monitoring is accurate and maintained on a current basis.

Action Taken

The Department indicated that the impact of two additional management positions is that inspection activities are more closely monitored and that an increased number of administrative programs have been implemented to enhance the ability of the division in achieving its mandate in the most efficient and effective manner. Such administrative programs include workload measurement, performance evaluation, and standard operating procedures.

The Department indicated that managers' meetings are conducted weekly to enable the review of divisional activities and the status of ongoing initiatives. Monthly staff meetings between employees and their managers permit an opportunity to further consult and communicate. The Department indicated that there has been an increase in inspection and enforcement activities, which are now higher than at any other time in the history of the Division.

The Department indicated that the Accident Investigation protocol and procedures is an area of considerable and noticeable improvement. To address shortfalls and ensure improvements within the accident investigation program, an internal committee was struck to gather information as to the best format to adopt. An Officer's Reference Manual has been developed with standard operating procedures with timelines. A future goal is to have the preliminary accident investigation report incorporated within the officer's computer system.

3.2.9 Food Premises Inspections and Licensing (2003 Annual Report, Part 2.16)

Introduction

In 2003, we reviewed the food premises inspections and licensing program at the Department of Government Services. The objectives of our review were to determine whether the Department of Health and Community Services and the GSC were complying with inspection and licensing requirements and whether deficiencies identified in our 1998 report were addressed.

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Conclusions from our 2003 review

As a result of our review, we concluded that many of the significant weaknesses identified in the food premises inspection and licensing program during our 1998 review had not been corrected. In particular:

- GSC could not demonstrate whether food premises were in compliance with all areas of the *Food Premises Regulations* as inspection report forms did not provide the information necessary to make this determination.
- There were 317 food premises in the GSC database which were operating without a valid license at the time of our review.
- GSC was not fully complying with the Memorandum of Understanding in that approximately 40% of food premises reviewed were not being inspected at the required frequency and the Department of Health and Community Services was not being provided with the required reports on program activities by the GSC.
- Policy and procedures were deficient in several areas including: no guidance for the inspector in determining the timeframe within which identified non-critical health hazards require correction; no guidance for the inspector with respect to the follow up of food premises which repeatedly violate the *Regulations*; and procedures related to the recording, investigating and reporting of food related complaints were not clearly established.
- The database was neither current nor accurate.
- There was non-compliance with policy and procedures as follows:
 - Inspectors did not always provide the food premises operator with the required time frame to correct the identified non-critical health hazard.
 - Licences were sometimes issued even though there was no evidence on file to indicate that identified critical health hazards were corrected prior to the licence being issued.
 - Inspections were not representative of year round operations in that they were mainly performed between November and March each year.
 - Inspection reports were not always completed properly.

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- Follow up inspections were not always completed to determine whether previously identified health hazards were corrected.
 - The GSC did not adequately monitor the food premises inspection and licensing activities.
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Update

In October 2005, we contacted the Department of Government Services requesting an update as to the progress on the comments and recommendations included in our 2003 report. The information provided by the Department in response to our request is outlined below.

2003 Recommendation

The Government Services Centre should comply with the Food Premises Regulations.

Action Taken

The Department indicated that its Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) had historically conducted pre-license renewal food premises inspections in the five month period between November to March, in advance of the April 1 renewal date. Attempts to conduct all such inspections within a five month period had contributed greatly to the inspection program shortcomings in the past.

The Department indicated that it implemented staggering food license expiration dates in 2003 so that inspections could be more evenly spread out over twelve months. In addition, a system of risk based inspections was introduced to ensure priority is given to higher risk premises.

While these changes have introduced some complications, particularly regarding the perceived accuracy of the existing data entry and reporting system (AMANDA), file audits and reviews have been done by Environmental Health Managers from the Regional Health Boards, as well as regional GSC management, to help ensure that the required number of inspections are being conducted annually.

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2003 Recommendation

Reports used by the inspectors should be revised to ensure compliance with the Food Premises Regulations.

Action Taken

The Department indicated that the Food Premises Inspection Report (FPIR) has been revised to identify the particular section of the *Food Premises Regulations* to which the Critical and Non-critical Hazards refer. Critical health hazards specified in the FPIR checklist reference the section of the *Food Premises Regulations* to which they relate and all critical hazard areas in the regulations are now identified in the FPIR. Further in March 2004 the Department of Health and Community Services provided the Department of Government Services with a guidance document entitled, "Guidelines for the Completion of the Food Premises Inspection Reports".

The Department indicated that the Inspection Report provided to the premises owner/operator now indicates that Critical hazards must be corrected immediately upon inspection. Non-critical hazards are very often corrected at the time of inspection as well. While it is acknowledged that thorough documentation of these events has not been consistent in the past, EHOs are regularly reminded and advised that they must be more diligent in documenting these directives on the FPIR and to take additional time to fully document all deficiencies and directives.

2003 Recommendation

The Department should comply with Department of Health and Community Services policy and procedures.

Action Taken

The Department indicated that both EHOs and clerical staff have been involved in data entry, depending on staff resources in each regional office. A concerted effort had been made to assign this responsibility to the EHOs to reduce, where possible, delays in entry of inspection data. However, in conjunction with the high workloads of inspectors, further reductions in human resources due to budget constraints have continued to affect the timeliness of data entry. The Department has now entered into discussions with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) with a view to automating data entry from the field if financially feasible.

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The Department also indicated that a number of issues with the AMANDA database have been resolved since 2003. For example, additional programming now permits risk assessment scores to be entered and assigned to the food premises licensing process. Nevertheless, the system presents on-going challenges with respect to the staggering of food license renewals adopted in 2003-04 and the tie-in to license fees. The OCIO is currently conducting a detailed review of the AMANDA system with a view to identifying and resolving these data management and information reporting difficulties.

2003 Recommendation

The Government Services Centre should comply with the requirements of the Memorandum of Understanding.

Action Taken

The Department indicated that a draft report for fiscal 2003-04 was developed for review by departmental executive. Owing to a number of issues, particularly concerning the previously referenced questions regarding the accuracy of the AMANDA database and the impact of the conversions to staggered licensing and risk based inspections, that report is still in draft form.

The Department of Health and Community Services has also produced a draft report for fiscal 2004-05, based on monthly statistical reports provided from the AMANDA system. Both of these documents are currently under review, in conjunction with audits of inspectors' files, to determine their accuracy.
