



Food Safety: Increasingly in the News

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SUMMARY

From Brisbane with the fewest number of restaurants (17), to the City of San Mateo with the most (253), and with 264 food trucks licensed in San Mateo County (County), residents have no shortage of places to dine. According to one report, “Daily, weekly, monthly and yearly, people get sick from eating food. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that (nationwide) at least 48 million of us get sick each year, with 125,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths.”¹ These statistics demonstrate the very real issues that surround the food service business and form the basis for the 2013-2014 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury’s (Grand Jury) investigation into the retail food program health inspection process in the County. All of us need to know that the establishments we patronize, from our morning coffee, to street food from our favorite food trucks, to our finest restaurants, are clean and that the food has been prepared using the safety practices recommended by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA). The public expects adequate and clear access to information that shows the results of inspections and the educational efforts made by the County to assure food facility compliance with safety standards.

The Environmental Health Department (EHD), a division of the San Mateo County Health System, is responsible for inspecting restaurants, schools, convenience stores, coffee shops, nursing homes and hospitals for compliance with the California Retail Food Code (CFRC). The EHD is also responsible for distributing the results of those inspections to the public. Environmental Health Specialists (Inspectors) make unannounced inspections of food establishments and conduct educational sessions aimed at improving the knowledge base of restaurant owners, food truck owners and operators, and food service employees. In 2013, over 4,400 facilities (restaurants, schools, hospitals, food trucks, etc.) in the county were inspected and 8,600 on-site service calls were conducted.

In addition to their hands-on presence in these food establishments, the Inspectors also are required by policy to report their findings on the EHD web site, so that the public can check the inspection status of all restaurants in the county.

The Grand Jury findings fall into two main categories: the food inspection process itself and the publication of inspection results on the EHD website. In general, the inspection process is innovative in nature with emphasis on utilizing evidence-based strategies, such as the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards and the CDC Campylobacter Project, to measure success. The website is maintained as a source of information for the public to see the inspection history of food establishments and to aid in selecting dining venues.

Our recommendations reflect the Grand Jury’s opinion that the inspection process, with some qualifications, is functioning in a very satisfactory manner and should be maintained as such. On

¹ Marler, Bill (2014 January 4). Food Safety News: Publisher’s Platform: How to Break a Foodborne Illness Story. Retrieved from: <http://www.foodsafetynews.com> on 2014 April 2.

the other hand, the website must be improved in order for it to be an effective informational tool. Specifically, there needs to be a mechanism for timely entry of inspection results through the use of more current technology. There also should be consistent monitoring of the site for completeness and accuracy of the posted information.

BACKGROUND

Of the \$660 billion spent on food last year in the United States, 47% was spent in restaurants, according to the National Restaurant Association.² In 2013 there were a total of 1,371 restaurants and 264 food trucks licensed in the County.³ Even though there were not a significant number of food-borne illness outbreaks in the County in either 2012 or 2013, Public Health Department (PHD) officials believe that the cases have been significantly underreported due to the following:

- Consumers failing to report an illness
- Consumers not knowing how, where and to whom they should report
- Consumers not recognizing the source of the illness
- Symptoms not severe enough to report

In a Food Safety News article, Bill Marler noted that for every person who gets counted as part of an outbreak, sometimes dozens of others are actually sick, but remain undiagnosed and therefore uncounted. For every E. coli case counted in an outbreak, 26 go undiagnosed; for Salmonella, that ratio is 1:29; for Campylobacter, it is 1:30; for Listeria, it is 1:2, and for Shigella, it is 1:33.⁴ That amounts to a lot of uncounted ill people.

The potential for a significant food-borne illness outbreak has compelled the Grand Jury to examine the food inspection process and the reporting structure to the public. The public has a right to know that the food they consume is safe, free from contamination and served in a clean environment.

METHODOLOGY

Documents

- San Mateo County Code of Ordinances, Title 5 – Business Regulations – Mobile Food Preparation Units
- San Mateo County EHD Food Facility Inventory by PE (Physical Entity)
- San Mateo EHD Risk-Based Food Program Elements
- San Mateo County Outbreak Initiation and Management Protocol, 1/9/14, San Mateo County Public Health Department

² <http://www.restaurant.org/News-Research/Research/Facts-at-a-Glance>. Retrieved: 2014 April 2

³ EHD Official, 1/4/14

⁴ Marler, Bill (2014 January 4). Retrieved 2014 April 2.

- Communicable Disease Control, San Mateo County Public Health System, November, 2010
- San Mateo County Organization Chart, 4/1/13, San Mateo County Department of Aging
- California Retail Food Code, excerpt from California Health and Safety Code, Part 7, effective 1/1/12

Interviews

In the course of this investigation, members of the Civil Grand Jury interviewed:

- Officials from the San Mateo County Health System
- Officials from the San Mateo County Environmental Health Department
- Officials from the San Mateo County Public Health Department

DISCUSSION

The San Mateo County EHD is charged with ensuring retail food safety within the County.⁵ Specifically, it is responsible to:

- Educate the public and businesses about proper sanitation and food handling
- Follow-up on complaints and reports of food-borne illness
- Provide food safety training
- Review construction plans to ensure that permitted food facilities comply with health codes
- Inspect and monitor all retail food operations such as markets, restaurants, schools, mobile catering facilities and special events
- Permit restaurants, temporary food events (e.g. street fairs, concerts, etc.), farmers' markets, and all other retail food operations
- Provide information for food safety manager training and certification courses
- Provide information on food establishment compliance via the internet
- Take enforcement actions, including suspension of permits, when needed, to protect health and safety

These responsibilities are carried out by Inspectors who undergo continuous training to assure their competency.

An EHD official (2014) stated:

New employees are trained based on their job classification and duties. For the first month, the new inspector is expected to attend the new employee orientation, review county and division policies, review CRFC⁶, review the inspection Marking Guide,

⁵ Environmental Health website: www.smchealth.org/food

⁶ California Retail Food Code, Division 104 – Environmental Health, Part 7, Chapter 1

shadow inspectors, conduct mock-up inspections and meet with Program Supervisor(s). Prior to releasing a new inspector to perform district work independently, evaluations and final field inspections are conducted by their Program Supervisor. ... all food inspectors are provided training through monthly Food Team meetings. Other training opportunities are available on specialized subjects through guest speaker engagement sessions, on-line, at approved conferences/organized training through our professional association (CEHA)⁷, Bay Area alliance committees, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and California Department of Public Health (CDPH). Program supervisors also schedule joint site visits with all inspectors to assess skills and ascertain whether specific trainings may improve skill development.... When new laws and codes are implemented, training sessions are planned for staff. Finally, inspectors are required to obtain 24 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) biennially to maintain their Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS) registration.

The County EHD regularly inspects nearly 4,400 food establishments. Businesses that present an imminent health risk due to major violations of the CRFC are closed by Environmental Health staff. In 2013, 26 food establishments were closed for a period of time from a few hours to permanently.⁸ For businesses that have repeated non-compliance with the CRFC, an administrative hearing is conducted with a business representative and Environmental Health staff.

A member of the public should be able to enter any food service establishment and locate the most current inspection report.⁹ A county ordinance provides that “Upon issuance of a routine inspection report by the health officer, the owner/operator of the food facility shall immediately post and maintain a copy of this document. This report shall be in a location that is clearly visible and available for review by the general public and patrons entering the establishment.”¹⁰ Unfortunately, compliance with posting requirements is only about 50%. Upon a third failure to post the report, a reinspection fee can be assessed.¹¹

In July 2013, in a move away from the historic approach of automatically inspecting all facilities three times per year, the EHD adopted the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards. The County is an early adopter of this FDA program which is “intended to help reduce food-borne illness associated with retail food establishments”¹² Implementation of these standards is a five year process and involves the adoption of nine federal standards of which the risk-based inspection process is one component. This process consists of dividing all food facilities into a category of risk and assigning a minimum number of inspections per year based on that risk assessment.

⁷ Centre for Environmental Health Activities

⁸ Appendix A, provided by EHD official, 1/4/14

⁹ Appendix B, provided by EHD official, 1/4/14

¹⁰ San Mateo County Code of Ordinances, 4.56.070

¹¹ Interview with EHD official, 2013, July 5

¹² Food and Drug Administration, (2014 January 16)

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
S A N M A T E O C O U N T Y



Protecting Our Health and Environment

Retail Food Facility Risk Categories

- Category 1: Convenience Stores & Coffee Shops
Pre-Packaged or Non-Pre-Heated (PHF) Foods
Heating of Commercially Processed Foods
No cooling of PHF
- Category 2: Schools (except Preschools or Susceptible Population)
Most foods prepared/cooked and served immediately.
Limited handling of raw ingredients (e.g. placing).
Complex prep of PHF requiring cooking, cooling, and reheating for hot holding is limited to 3 items.
May have hot/cold holding of PHF after prep/cooking.
Most fast food restaurants, some diners
- Category 3: Full service restaurants with extensive menu
Extensive handling of raw foods (e.g. cutting, forming)
Complex prep of PHF requiring cooking, cooling, and reheating for hot holding involves more than 3 items.
Extensive self-service/buffet counters,
Facilities that serve highly susceptible populations (e.g. hospitals, preschools, nursing homes)
Processing at the retail level (e.g. smoking, curing, reduced oxygen packaging)

The adoption of this methodology focuses resources on those food facilities that pose the greatest risk for causing food-borne illness. The higher risk level categories are inspected most frequently and the lowest risk the least often.

- Category 1: Inspected one time per year
Category 2: Inspected two times per year
Category 3: Inspected three times per year

Using this approach gives inspectors the time needed to assist high-risk food facilities in developing or improving their food safety management systems and identifying strengths and weaknesses in these systems. This approach also helps those involved develop possible solutions and allows the time for more frequent interactions. The goal is not just enforcement of the standards but also to provide face-to-face education on pertinent subjects relative to food preparation and service.

Another program exists designed to assure the safety of food. An official of the EHD (2014) declared:

In spring 2010, San Mateo County applied for the CDC cooperative agreement with the Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net). In SMC, the annual number of culture-confirmed Campylobacter¹³ infections voluntarily reported to Public Health from 2000 to 2009 averaged 218 cases. In 2009, there were 238 reported cases or 33 cases per 100,000. This is more than 2.5 times the CDC... objective of 12.3 cases per 100,000. Because many infections are not reported, it is estimated that the projected true burden of Campylobacter infection in SMC in 2009 was greater than 1,000 cases per 100,000. SMC proposed to develop an intervention to reduce the burden of Campylobacter throughout the county. The CDC awarded San Mateo County a five-year grant in the amount of \$149,078 annually from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2015.¹⁴ As a result of this process, inspectors:

- *Collect and monitor data on the incidence of Campylobacter.*
- *Develop and evaluate targeted interventions based on these data.*
- *Establish strategic partnerships with community organizations.*
- *Increase public awareness of Campylobacter and its associated health risks.*

Project objectives over the 5-year period include:

- *Reducing incidence of Campylobacter infection by 15%-25%.*
- *Decreasing food facility risk factors associated with raw chicken handling by 50%.*
- *Increasing food handler knowledge of Campylobacter risk and safe food handling practices associated with raw chicken by 50%.*
- *Increasing the public's knowledge and awareness of the environmental health role in public health by 30%-40%.¹⁵*

In addition to participation in the *Campylobacter* research grant and the adoption of the FDA Food Safety Standardization Program, the EHD works in close collaboration with the San Mateo County Public Health Department to reduce and manage incidents of food-borne illness in the county.

Most interactions between Environmental Health and Public Health Departments (PHD) occur when there is a possible/suspected outbreak of reportable diseases that may be associated with

¹³**Campylobacter:** Campylobacteriosis is a disease or infection that can be transmitted directly or indirectly between animals and humans. Usual symptoms are fever, diarrhea and abdominal cramps. Raw poultry meat is often contaminated with *Campylobacter* since the bacterium can live in the intestines of healthy birds. It is also found in pigs and cattle. Eating undercooked chicken, or ready-to-eat foods that have been in contact with raw chicken, is the most common source of infection.

¹⁴Clinical Infectious Diseases, 2004:38

¹⁵Clinical Infectious Diseases, 2004:38

food. Verified lab reports of infection require immediate investigation. The process involves the PHD notifying the EHD of an outbreak. Then Environmental Health inspectors are often involved in assisting the PHD in tracking down the source of infection.

According to an EHD official (2014):

In fact, members of the EHD and PHD (epidemiology and Communicable Disease divisions) have formed an inter-departmental team with the purpose of developing methods to foster cooperation and information sharing. So far this process has resulted in the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding and in their most recent meeting, January 23, 2014, the team reached consensus on roles and responsibilities of each department during a complex food borne illness outbreak and documented them with a complex outbreak checklist. The team will meet on a regular basis to solidify their collective agreement and to continue to define time lines for action, lines of communication and the development of a running dialogue portal.

An additional major responsibility of the EHD is to educate the public on the results of food establishment inspections. The EHD maintains a website to inform the public on the various aspects of food management in the County, including names of all restaurants by city in the county and their inspection results.

Through the use of the on-line Restaurant and Food Inspection Results tool one can look up the inspection history of food establishments in the County. The inspection information will indicate the major and minor violations at each establishment, the closure history, and overall health code compliance. When an interested party enters the name of a restaurant, the information found can include the following terms:

Routine Inspection: A routine inspection is an unannounced inspection in which the whole establishment is checked for risks to its customers' health and compliance with the California Uniform Retail Food Facilities Law. A rating is given during this type of inspection. The possible ratings are:

Excellent: No major or minor violations that might cause a food-borne illness were observed. The overall level of food safety was excellent.

Good: No major violations that might cause a food-borne illness were observed. However at least one minor violation related to food-borne illness was found. The overall level of food safety was good.

Fair: At least one major violation that might cause a food-borne illness was observed. The overall level of food safety was fair.

Poor: Major violations that might cause a food-borne illness were observed. The overall level of food safety was poor.

Closed: Failure to correct major violations of the California Retail Food Code (Cal Code) results in a food facility being closed. The closure may be temporary or permanent.

Follow up Inspection: A follow up inspection is performed to check if violations noted at the last inspection have been corrected. If the entire facility is checked during the inspection the facility may be rated (again).

In addition to rating the status of restaurants, the department conducts other inspections/assessments as needed. Many of these are educational in nature designed to further enhance public safety.

Educational Inspection: An educational inspection is a special consultation with the facility operator and food workers, which provides information and practical advice regarding food safety. No health code violations are cited as part of this inspection. Food workers and managers are shown how to prevent violations from occurring by increasing their understanding of the principles and practices of food safety.

Campylobacter (Campy) Interview - Knowledge Assessment: A knowledge assessment is a specialized educational visit to the facility which examines food workers knowledge about safe handling of raw chicken. Knowledge of cross contamination, cooking temperature, and bacterial risks associated with raw chicken is evaluated. No health code violations are cited during the assessment. The information collected is being used to design strategies for prevention of food-borne illness under a grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

Campy Facility Assessment - Risk Assessment: A risk assessment is a specialized educational visit to the facility which examines how raw chicken is handled. Raw chicken in storage, preparation and cooking is observed, evaluated and discussed with the operator. No health code violations are cited during the assessment. The information collected is being used to design strategies for prevention of food-borne illness under a grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

Investigation: An inspection made of a specific facility to determine if certain conditions exist such as the sale of food from an unapproved source.

Epidemiology Investigation: An epidemiology investigation is an inspection made to determine the cause of an illness or illness outbreak.

License/Permit Investigation: A license/permit investigation is an investigation to determine if the proper permits or licenses are issued to the facility.

Permit Issued/Final Inspection: A permit issued/final inspection is an inspection to verify that the facility has been properly constructed, equipment has been properly installed and the facility meets all applicable standards in order to commence operation.

Though designed to be informative, the website unfortunately may contain outdated or inaccurate information. The examples below illustrate inaccuracies which do not permit customers to make appropriate choices about which restaurants to patronize. Conversely, correct information allows for a greater sense of security when it is clear that a restaurant has had favorable inspection results.

In both instances, the restaurants were closed and that information was posted on the Food Facility Closure web page. However, if one searches for the same restaurants by name, the closures are never noted.

Food Facility Closures:

The following businesses failed to correct major violations of the California Retail Food Code (CalCode) and are/were closed due to these violations. Click on the facility's name to be directed to our Online Inspection Results web page where you can type in the facility name and view the inspection history.

DBA/NAME	ABC Restaurant
ADDRESS	123 First St., City
DATE OF CLOSURE	1/23/14
REASON FOR CLOSURE:	13 Food not in good condition, safe and unadulterated.

DBA/NAME	ZYX Cafe
ADDRESS	456 Second Ave., City
DATE OF CLOSURE	1/22/14
REASON FOR CLOSURE:	13. Food not in good condition, safe and unadulterated. 22. Improper disposal and/or backup of sewage or wastewater.

Restaurant Details	
Name	ABC RESTAURANT
Address	456 SECOND AVE. CITY, STATE, ZIP
Phone	☎ 123-456-7890

Inspection Details	
10/09/2012	ROUTINE / FACILITY STATUS GOOD
06/22/2012	ROUTINE / FACILITY STATUS FAIR

Figure 2

Restaurant Details	
Name	ZYX CAFE
Address	456 SECOND AVE. CITY, STATE, ZIP
Phone	☎ 111-222-3333

Inspection Details	
01/23/2014	COMPLAINT-FOLLOW-UP
01/22/2014	COMPLAINT-INITIAL
01/21/2014	ROUTINE / FACILITY STATUS FAIR
10/08/2013	CAMPY FACILITY ASSESSMENT
10/08/2013	CAMPY INTERVIEW
05/03/2013	FOLLOWUP INSPECTION
03/08/2013	ROUTINE / FACILITY STATUS FAIR
11/30/2012	COMPLAINT-INITIAL
10/26/2012	ROUTINE / FACILITY STATUS FAIR
05/04/2012	ROUTINE / FACILITY STATUS POOR
05/04/2012	COMPLAINT-INITIAL
02/01/2012	FOLLOWUP INSPECTION

Figure 3

Tauzin (2014)¹⁶ states “thirty four percent” of adults use the internet to obtain nutritional and/or restaurant information. Searchers are no longer limited to “official” government sites and are increasingly moving to social media for facts about the eating establishments they choose to frequent. Food safety is a topic of interest that benefits from social media. The information available on the website Yelp®¹⁷ provides an illustrative example. Choosing where to eat by browsing on the website can be challenging. A new feature on Yelp will help users make a decision that factors in health inspection grades as well as food reviews. Even the National Restaurant Association has taken note of this social media phenomenon and is advising its members to determine their customer demographics and position themselves on websites of interest to their potential diners.

¹⁶Tauzin, Anna (2014 February 15). Social media options: Which is right for my restaurant. Retrieved from: <http://www.restaurant.org>

¹⁷<http://www.yelp.com>

In San Francisco, Louisville and Raleigh, health ratings appear on Yelp in the form of a numerical health rating score – 100, 99, 98 and so forth. According to Dr. Jonathan E. Fielding, Los Angeles County Public Health Director, restaurant grades have been available on their EHD website since the inspection process began in the 1990s. But he acknowledged that diners rarely visited the website when deciding where to eat until Yelp entered the picture. “It’s become such a popular website and if you can have one stop shopping for all that information, then you don’t have to go to our [the county’s website],” Dr. Fielding said.¹⁸ Further, he stated that the posting of letter grades has been linked to a reduction in food-borne illness hospitalizations in Los Angeles County. Finally, Dr. Fielding said that even though it’s too early to know yet, he expects the partnership with Yelp will only further promote public health.

Yet another source of information for the consumer is the use of window placards that prominently display the restaurant’s inspection status. Examples include the use of letter grades, color coded blocks and percentage scores which are clearly visible from the street. Santa Clara County is poised to join New York City, Los Angeles, Sacramento and Alameda County, in the use of placards. The expansion of this concept indicates the effectiveness of this system as an informational tool for consumers.

FINDINGS

- F1. All food establishments are required by county ordinance to clearly post the most current inspection report.
- F2. The adoption of the Federal Drug Administration National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards by the Environmental Health Department is leading to a more comprehensive program of food safety management.
- F3. Participation in the “Campylobacter Project” is increasing the knowledge base of restaurant food handlers in how to safely handle and prepare raw chicken.
- F4. The Environmental Health Department maintains a website that allows the public to view the inspection status of food establishments.
- F5. The use of window placards to display inspection status has been adopted in an increasing number of cities and counties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2013-2014 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Environmental Health to:

- R1. When a food establishment has not clearly posted its most current inspection report, as noted by an inspector entering the premises, assess fees upon the first reinspection instead of on the third as is the current practice.

¹⁸Chang, Andrea (2014 January 11). Yelp adds L.A. restaurants’ health grades to review pages. Retrieved from: <http://www.latimes.com>

- R2. Continue progress toward achieving full implementation of the Federal Health Association National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards.
- R3. Continue participation in the Centers of Disease Control grant (Campylobacter project) and evaluate the results with the intent of implementing any “best practices” that result from the study.
- R4. Improve by December 31, 2014 the usefulness of the Environmental Health Department website by ensuring that each facility entry contains a synopsis of any violations, the latest inspection date and type, and the facility’s food safety rating.
- R5. Develop and implement by December 31, 2014 a quality assurance process to audit the content of the Restaurant and Food Inspection Results section on the website.
- R6. Develop and implement by June 30, 2015 a program which requires food establishments to prominently display their inspection status via the use of window placards.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal code section 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

From the following governing bodies:

- San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

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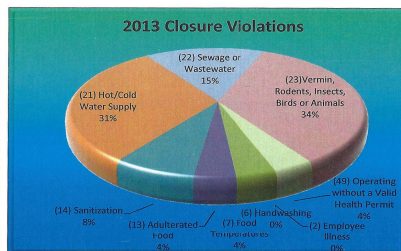
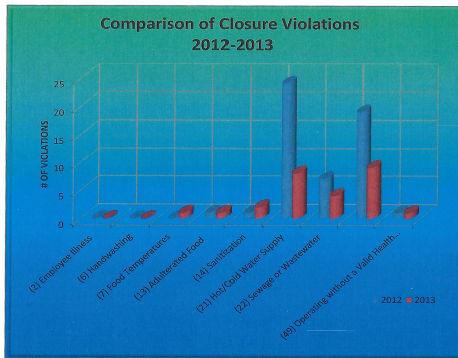
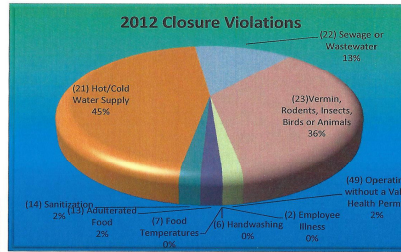
GLOSSARY

- **Acute Gastrointestinal Illness:** A short duration illness most often characterized by the agents most likely to be transmitted from infected food employees through contamination of food, resulting in diarrhea, either alone or in conjunction with other gastrointestinal symptoms, such as vomiting, fever or abdominal cramps.
- **Campylobacter:** Campylobacteriosis is a disease or infection that can be transmitted directly or indirectly between animals and humans. Usual symptoms are fever, diarrhea and abdominal cramps. Raw poultry meat is often contaminated with *Campylobacter* since the bacterium can live in the intestines of healthy birds. It is also found in pigs and cattle. Eating undercooked chicken, or ready-to-eat foods that have been in contact with raw chicken, is the most common source of infection.
- **E. coli:** *Escherichia coli*; normally found in the human gastrointestinal tract and existing as numerous strains, some of which are responsible for diarrheal diseases.
- **Listeria:** Listeria infection is a food-borne illness that can be very serious for pregnant women and people with impaired immune systems. Listeria infection is most commonly contracted by eating improperly processed deli meats and milk products, including Mexican cheeses (such as queso fresco) made from pasteurized milk and likely contaminated during cheese-making.
- **Salmonella:** Bacteria that enter the digestive tract in contaminated food, causing food poisoning.
- **Shigella:** Bacteria that include some species that causes dysentery in humans.

APPENDIX A

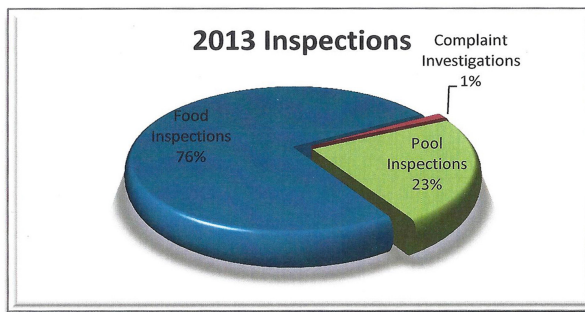
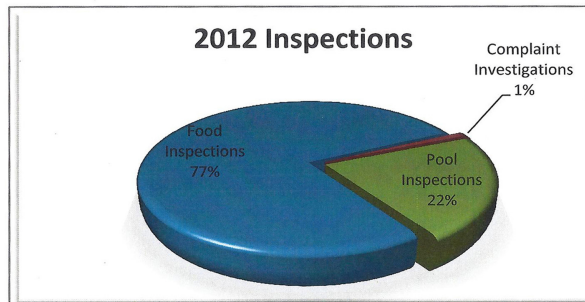
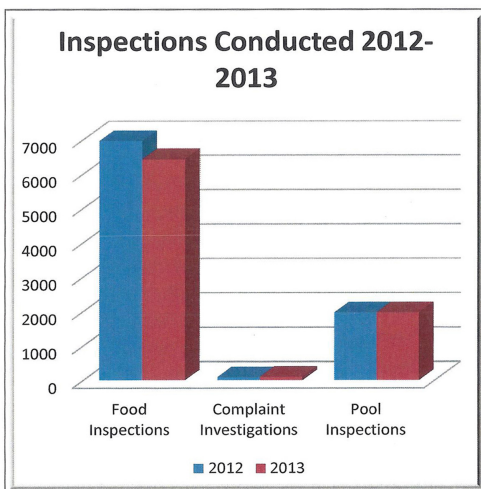
FOOD FACILITY CLOSURE REPORT

Closure Violation	2012	2013
(2) Employee Illness	0	0
(6) Handwashing	0	0
(7) Food Temperatures	0	1
(13) Adulterated Food	1	1
(14) Sanitization	1	2
(21) Hot/Cold Water Supply	24	8
(22) Sewage or Wastewater	7	4
(23) Vermin, Rodents, Insects, Birds or Animals	19	9
(49) Operating without a Valid Health Permit	1	1
Total	53	28




12-2013 Inspections/Investigations

Service Type	2012	2013
Food Inspections	6959	6429
Complaint Investigations	88	99
Pool Inspections	1967	1967



APPENDIX B

		<h2 style="margin: 0;">Food Program Inspection Report</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">San Mateo County Environmental Health Services Division 2000 Alameda de las Pulgas, Suite 100, San Mateo, CA 94403 (650) 372-6200 Fax (650) 627-8244 www.smhealth.org/food</p>		<p>FOOD SAFETY STATUS</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT ⁽⁵¹⁾</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> GOOD ⁽⁵²⁾</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> FAIR ⁽⁵³⁾</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> POOR ⁽⁵⁴⁾</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> CLOSURE ⁽⁵⁵⁾</p>
Facility Name		Date		
Address		City		
Owner		Record ID		
E-mail/Phone	P/E	Follow-Up Date		
Inspection Type <input type="checkbox"/> Routine ** <input type="checkbox"/> Complaint <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-Up <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Reinspection				
California Health & Safety Code Violations		California Health & Safety Code Violations		
	IN	OUT	MAJ	
	COS	NO	NA	
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
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** A COPY OF THIS REPORT MUST BE IMMEDIATELY POSTED WHERE IT IS CLEARLY VISIBLE AND AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC See reverse side for the code sections and general requirements that correspond to each violation listed below. IN-in compliance OUT-out of compliance MAJ-major violation COS-corrected on site NO-not observed NA-not applicable				
ADDITIONAL INSPECTIONS REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE MINIMUM COMPLIANCE MAY RESULT IN BILLING AT AN HOURLY RATE AS PER SAN MATEO COUNTY ORDINANCE				
SIGNATURE:		PRINT:	TITLE:	
SPECIALIST:		PHONE:	page of	
FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY <input type="checkbox"/> CODE A-9 <input type="checkbox"/> CODE B9-11 <input type="checkbox"/> CODE C11.1 <input type="checkbox"/> CODE D1.3 <input type="checkbox"/> CODE E3.5 <input type="checkbox"/> CODE F5+				

Issued: May 20, 2014



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
County Manager



Date: May 20, 2014
Board Meeting Date: August 5, 2014
Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: John L. Maltbie, County Manager

Subject: 2013-14 Grand Jury Response- Food Safety: Increasingly in the News

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Board of Supervisor's response to the 2013-14 Grand Jury report titled: Food Safety: Increasingly in the News.

BACKGROUND:

On May 20, 2014, the Grand Jury filed a report titled: Food Safety: Increasingly in the News. The Board of Supervisors is required to submit comments on the findings and recommendations pertaining to the matters under control of the County of San Mateo within ninety days. The County's response to the report is due to the Honorable Dave Pine no later than August 18, 2014.

Acceptance of this report contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 outcome of a Collaborative Community by ensuring that all Grand Jury findings and recommendations are thoroughly reviewed by the appropriate County departments and that, when appropriate, process refinements are made to improve the quality and efficiency of services provided to the public and other agencies.

DISCUSSION:

Food Safety: Increasingly in the News.

Findings:

Grand Jury Finding Number 1. All food establishments are required by county ordinance to clearly post the most current inspection report.

Response: Agree. This is required pursuant to San Mateo County Ordinance Chapter 4.56.070 "Posting of inspection reports."

Grand Jury Finding Number 2. The adoption of the Federal Drug Administration National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards by the Environmental Health Department is leading to a more comprehensive program of food safety management.

Response: Agree. The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards is composed of nine standards, including implementation of a HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) Based Inspection Program. This type of inspection program prioritizes the elimination of critical hazards, which can lead to foodborne illness, over more minor or technical violations.

Grand Jury Finding Number 3. Participation in the “Campylobacter Project” is increasing the knowledge base of restaurant food handlers in how to safely handle and prepare raw chicken.

Response: Agree.

Grand Jury Finding Number 4. The Environmental Health Department maintains a website that allows the public to view the inspection status of food establishments.

Response: Agree.

Grand Jury Finding Number 5. The use of window placards to display inspection status has been adopted in an increasing number of cities and counties.

Response: Agree.

Recommendations:

The Grand Jury recommends to the County Board of Supervisors that:

- 1. When a food establishment has not clearly posted its most current inspection report, as noted by an inspector entering the premises, assess fees upon the first inspection instead of on the third, as is the current practice.**

Response: Per San Mateo County Ordinance Chapter 5.64.06, EHD can only assess re-inspection fees after the second inspection. As part of enforcement of violations, EHD uses re-inspection fees as a deterrent by charging for any re-inspections (as allowed by Ordinance) required to gain compliance.

- 2. Continue progress toward achieving full implementation of the Federal Health Association National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards.**

Response: EHD initiated the process outlined by Federal Drug Administration (FDA) to evaluate and modify the inspection program in 2008, and includes training staff on different inspection strategies. We anticipate that we will complete this by June 2015.

3. Continue participation in the Centers of Disease Control grant (Campylobacter project) and evaluate the results with the intent of implementing any “best practices” that result from the study.

Response: EHD currently holds seminars for new restaurant owners which focus on reducing critical risk factor violations identified by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). EHD has incorporated material from the Campylobacter project into these seminars.

In addition, EHD is currently examining results from the CDC’s research pertaining to Campylobacter bacteria from chicken. The County of San Mateo will use this information to develop a more robust and targeted outreach program with the goal of reducing the risk of foodborne illness from Campylobacteria.

4. Improve by December 31, 2014 the usefulness of the Environmental Health Department website by ensuring that each facility entry contains a synopsis of any violations, the latest inspection date and type, and the facility’s food safety rating.

Response: EHD is in the process of designing and implementing a program to provide handheld computers for our field inspectors. By giving inspectors mobile devices, inspectors can input data immediately during an inspection. This should reduce the lag time between an inspection and the posting of the inspection data on the EHD website. Once we implement a restaurant placarding system (expected in 2015), that information will also be posted on the EHD website.

5. Develop and implement by December 31, 2014 a quality assurance process to audit the content of the Restaurant and Food Inspection Results section on the website.

Response: Please see response to Recommendation 4. Also, as part of implementing the National Retail Food Regulatory Standards, EHD will modify our quality assurance program to ensure the accuracy of the information collected by the inspectors.

6. Develop and implement by June 30, 2015 a program which requires food establishments to prominently display their inspection status via the use of window placards.

Response: Please see response to Recommendation 4. EHD will be developing a placarding program for San Mateo County food establishments that will include a

requirement that food establishments post a placard with the results of the most recent inspection in a prominent location such as a window so that the public can easily see the results.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no Net County Cost associated with accepting this report.