

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY Environmental Health Department


Jill S. Yaeger, Director Environmental Health

ATTACHMENT 2

- 2037 West Cleveland Ave
- Madera CA 93637
- (559) 675-7823
- FAX (559) 675-7919
- TDD (559) 675-8970
- envhealth@madera-county.com
- www.madera-county.com/envhealth/

May 3, 2013

TO: The Honorable D. Lynn Jones
Presiding Judge
Madera, County Superior Court
209 W. Yosemite Avenue
Madera, CA 93637

FROM: Jill Yaeger, Director of Environmental Health Madera County CA 
2037 W. Cleveland Avenue
Madera CA 93637

SUBJ: Response to 2012-13 Madera County Grand Jury Report Final Report "Environmental Health"

Honorable Judge Jones:

Pursuant to California Penal Code 933.05, Jill Yaeger, Director of Environmental Health, submits this response to the findings and recommendations in the 2012-13 Madera County Grand Jury Report on "Environmental Health"

FINDINGS

1. *The agency is unable to complete all required inspections due to staffing shortages and duplicate processes.*

Response: The Environmental Health Department is a fee supported department with an expectation to have a zero net county cost; this has resulted in a staffing reduction from 18.5 FTE in 2008-09 (63% cost recovery) to the current 13.5 FTE with 11.0 FTE funded in the prior (95% cost recovery), current (est. 100% cost recovery) and next fiscal years.

To handle the workload with fewer employees, the Department has been: prioritizing the workload based on health risk to the public; continuing to review all processes to identify/eliminate unnecessary workflow activities; creating and revising standard operating procedures to facilitate consistency, training of new personnel and program sustainability when personnel leaves/changes; and improving coordination with other departments and agencies, as well as our communication with other departments, agencies, regulated facilities/operations and the public. Staff is also scrutinizing potentially missed revenue and searching for new revenue sources to help offset the cost of staffing.

The Department is relying on Extra-Help professional staffing, PACT workers, and volunteers. In addition to performing the core permitting, inspection and enforcement duties of environmental health programs, the Department is also part of a team with Public Health that responds to illness outbreaks which is not a cost recoverable activity. Typically, the number of regulated facilities/operations does not decrease, but rather as the economy improves, new facilities/operations increases as well as some previously unrecognized regulated facilities/operations are being discovered further adding to the workload.

2. *Missed inspections jeopardize the health and safety of the public at large.*

Response: The Department acknowledges that fewer inspections may result in an increased perceived and real public health risk. Meeting an inspection frequency demonstrates a level of protection and public expectation. Despite staffing reductions in both professional and support classifications, Staff is committed to increasing the number of routine inspections at regulated facilities while also prioritizing those facilities and operations that contribute to the highest risk to public health and safety. Illness outbreaks and other environmental/public health concerns pull Staff away from routine, core program duties, thus contributing to the challenge of meeting minimum inspection levels. Over time, inspections may potentially continue to fall below standard levels with the current staffing even with more effective management of the workload.

3. *Each inspection observed was professionally accomplished following strict guidelines.*

Response: The Department, especially Management, appreciates this finding and comment by the Grand Jury. Professional conduct by EH employees is not just expected, but required to effectively carry out our duties and communicating with both the public and regulated facilities. Current permanent inspection staff has a minimum of 5 years experience; the total experience of all professional staff is approximately 117 years ranging from 5 to 26 years. Professional staff is trained not only in specific environmental health programs and laws, but also in related areas such as hazardous materials emergency response, conflict resolution, environmental sampling, etc. Professional staff is also required to satisfy 24 continuing education units every two years to maintain State registration.

4. *The use of computer tablets will increase the number of inspections completed.*

Response: Field computer equipment will improve efficiency thereby reducing the amount of time performing required routine activities, such as data entry. Data entry is required for tracking environmental health programs, such as, compliance, violation enforcement, permitting, time accounting, billing, and performing mandated electronic reporting to the State. By entering inspection data directly into a field computer which is later uploaded into the department's data system, we eliminate the time it takes to manually enter the data. The inspection report is also in electronic form which facilitates the ability to make this information available on the internet for public access or to emergency responders. Electronic inspections will also ultimately reduce paper and printing costs. Field computers can result in an increase of approximately 20% more inspections conducted.

5. *EH Department was awarded a California Environmental Reporting System one-time grant for the procurement of computer tablets. The State agency did not appropriate the funds last fiscal year. Distribution has been extended to June 30, 2013.*

Response: The State has granted a final deadline extension to December 31, 2013 to all grant recipients. Based upon our research on applicable field tablets, this extended deadline will enable the department to procure the selected equipment between July and September. This grant funding is included in the department's proposed 2013-14 budget.

6. *Outstanding leadership and teamwork was found in the EH Department resulting in the most effective use of available resources and great employee morale. Inspectors were helpful and professional in their dealings with the public.*

Response: The Department appreciates the Grand Jury's acknowledgement of staff's efforts and attitude in performing our duties and responsibilities. EH Staff accepts the responsibility as a Department/County Team, not just on an individual effort. There is mutual respect among EH employees as well as respect to fellow County employees, regulated facility operators and the public we serve. Professional staff is trained in multiple programs, so while having primary program assignments and duties, they can fill in where needed and willingly do so. This willingness is a desire of the employee to enhance their expertise which results in better customer service. This past year the Department has also had the benefit of many volunteers from student interns and the public. These resources have been helpful in managing a workload that could be more burdensome and affect morale.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grand Jury Recommends:

1. *Computer tablets be purchased for the EH Team prior to the June 30, 2013 funding deadline.*

Response: See the response to Finding #5. The grant extension allows more time to purchase and test improved versions (and possibly lower cost) of the field inspection equipment being considered by the Department.

2. *The Board of Supervisors approve the implementation of EH's recommended restaurant grading system.*

Response: The Department appreciates the comments received from the Grand Jury members, restaurant owners, and the general public in addition to the discussion and direction from the Board to staff. The Department is working with local representatives of the restaurant industry and interested public to present potential options for the Board's consideration this summer/fall.

3. *The EH department be recognized and commended for its outstanding leadership and management.*

Response: Management is very appreciative of the commendation by the Grand Jury. Despite the challenges, Staff continues to strive for improvement in reducing risks to public

health and is dedicated to carrying out the responsibilities of environmental health programs and serving the public to the best of our ability.

Cc: ✓ Madera County Board of Supervisors
Darin McCandless, Risk Management Analyst



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF MADERA

MADERA COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
200 WEST FOURTH STREET/MADERA, CALIFORNIA 93637
(559) 675-7700 / FAX (559) 673-3302 / TDD (559) 675-8970

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June 11, 2013

The Honorable D. Lynn Jones
Presiding Judge
Madera, County Superior Court
209 W. Yosemite Avenue
Madera, CA 93637



Subject: Response to the 2012-13 Grand Jury Report entitled "Final Report Environmental Health".

Honorable Judge Jones:

Pursuant to California Penal Code 933.05, the Madera County Board of Supervisors submits this response to the findings and recommendations in the 2012-13 Madera county Grand Jury Report on "Final Report Environmental Health". See Attachment #1

The following are the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations and the Board of Supervisors' responses:

Finding 1:

"The Grand Jury found that the agency is unable to complete all required inspections due to staffing shortages and duplicate processes."

Response:

The response of the County Director of Environmental Health to the above Findings is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors response. (See Attachment #2)

Finding 2:

"The Grand Jury found that missed inspections jeopardize the health and safety of the public at large."

Response:

The response of the County Director of Environmental Health to the above Findings is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors response. (See Attachment #2)

Finding 3:

“The Grand Jury found that each inspection observed was professionally accomplished following strict guidelines.”

Response:

The response of the County Director of Environmental Health to the above Findings is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors response. (See Attachment #2)

Finding 4:

“The Grand Jury found that the use of computer tablets will increase the number of inspections completed.”

Response:

The response of the County Director of Environmental Health to the above Findings is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors response. (See Attachment #2)

Finding 5:

“The Grand Jury found that the EH Department was awarded a California Environmental Reporting System one-time grant for the procurement of computer tablets. The State agency did not appropriate the funds last fiscal year. Distribution has been extended to June 30, 2013.”

Response:

The response of the County Director of Environmental Health to the above Findings is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors response. (See Attachment #2)

Finding 6:

“The Grand Jury found that outstanding leadership and team work was found in the EH Department resulting in the most effective use of available resources and great employee morale. Inspectors were helpful and professional in their dealings with the public.”

Response:

The response of the County Director of Environmental Health to the above Findings is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors response. (See Attachment #2)

Recommendation 1:

The Grand Jury recommends that the Computer tablets be purchased for the EH Team prior to the June 30, 2013 funding deadline.

Response:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The response of the County Director of Environmental Health to the above Recommendation is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors response. (See Attachment #2)

Recommendation 2:

The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors approve the implementation of EH's recommended restaurant grading system.

Response:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The response of the County Director of Environmental Health to the above Recommendation is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors response. (See Attachment #2)

Sincerely,



Max Rodriguez, Chairman
Madera County Board of Supervisors
Attachment