



## COUNTY OF LAKE

Public Health Services Department - Administration  
922 Bevins Court  
LAKEPORT, CALIFORNIA 95453-9739  
Telephone 707/263-1090 FAX 707/263-4395

*Promoting an Optimal State of Wellness in Lake County*

### MEMORANDUM


Jim Brown  
Health Services Director  
(707)263-1090

Karen M. Tait, M.D.  
Health Officer  
(707)263-1090

Ray Ruminski, REHS, Director  
Environmental Health Division  
(707)263-1164

DATE: August 19, 2015

TO: The Honorable Stephen O. Hedstrom, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, via the Lake County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Raymond Ruminski, Environmental Health Director 

SUBJECT: Required Response to FY 2014-2015 Grand Jury Final Report on Food Safety in Lake County

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933, I am submitting this response to the FY 2014-2015 Final Grand Jury Report via the Lake County Board of Supervisors.

#### Response to Recommendations (Page 7)

R1 EHD should continue to aggressively recruit a third inspector.

Environmental Health has hired an inspector trainee to replace the staff that was hired and resigned in 2014. Environmental Health will revise work assignments so that more than three inspectors will conduct retail food inspections.

Recruitment and retention of quality staff is hindered by low salaries and wages.

R2 In accordance with the California Retail Food Code (Health and Safety Code Sections 114381, 114384, 114395, 114419.3), when inspection violations are identified, offending organizations should have to pay the defined fine or fee. We recommend that the amount of the fine or fee should be based on the severity of the violations, the level of risk faced by the public, and/or the limits set by the Code.

The Environmental Health fee ordinance is generally based on costs to provide regulatory services and calculations of average times. However permit fees do not attempt to recover 100% of costs because we believe the expense to local business owners will be too great. State realignment funds supplement annual permit fees.

Starting a new food facility without the permit is very rare but when encountered we have applied the administrative fine of three times the permit fee. Late payment of the annual permit renewal incurs progressive late payment fees.

Formal enforcement filed in Superior Court by our local District Attorney is described in the statute but not a practical option in most cases.

R3 When inspection violations are identified, offending organizations should be required to pay a set rate for EHD inspectors for every re-inspection. This may require a change in current county ordinances.

A formal procedure to assess re-inspection fees can be developed for inclusion in the Environmental Health fee ordinance. But Environmental Health staff must be able to give operators an appropriate level of regulatory oversight.

R4 There should be an annual increase in permit fees.

The Health Department will consider regular annual increases in the next fee ordinance proposal presented to the Board of Supervisors.

R5 Since some county departments (i.e., IT) charge other county departments/agencies for their services, EHD should be able to charge county departments/agencies for their services or be paid for them out of the county funds.

The Health Services Department now has policies and agreements to charge other county departments for regular program services.

R7 Have staff certified as trainers in this field and start offering training for a fee (like that required for a Food Handlers Permit which is no longer offered locally).

Environmental Health offered this service several years ago. It was discontinued when credentialed staff resigned for other employment. At this time required training and certification for professional food managers and workers is available from vendors in classroom and internet formats. We do not believe it will be cost effective for county staff to offer the specific training and certification and we prefer not to compete with private sector enterprise.

R8 In coordination with California Retail Food Code (Health and Safety Code Section 114381(e)), develop a color coded/alpha-numeric system posted on each facility that the public can easily see to verify the safety rating of the organization and that a current, valid permit exists.

Environmental Health can present a proposal to the Board of Supervisors to consider a local ordinance for posting inspection summary information at the food establishment.

R9 Research the possibility of opening an EHD testing laboratory as an income generator and offer those services to other counties.

A modern public health lab is very capital intensive to establish and costly to operate. The limited use of lab services, even with other counties, could not justify the expense.

R10 To ensure that all permit funds due are collected, online sources should be used to identify new start-up food service organizations in the area.

Environmental Health staff presently review various online sources for Lake County retail food sales.

R11 Develop a program to recruit student interns (paid and unpaid) among college students in California.

The value of student interns is not productivity during the internship period but in recruitment for future career opportunities. Our recent experience with student interns has not been particularly successful.

R12 Post organizations in violation on the EHD website. Add the website address to the posted permit ([http://www.co.lake.ca.us/Government/Directory/Environmental\\_Health.htm](http://www.co.lake.ca.us/Government/Directory/Environmental_Health.htm)).

Inspection information including code violations is presently posted on Environmental Health web pages. Web address information can be printed on the permit. If a placard system is implemented web address will also be noted on posted notices.