

DATE: September 27, 2000

TO: Harry Hufford, Interim CAO

FROM: Thomas Berg, Director *TWB*
Resource Management Agency

SUBJECT: **RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION**

TOTAL ACCEPT

In response to the recommendations directed to the Environmental Health Division's (EHD) Food Protection Program in the Grand Jury's Final Report for 1999-2000, the following comments are provided:

Grand Jury Recommendation R-1: *That EHD develop a food service rating system which prominently displays to the public who uses a food service facility, an easily understood synopsis of the Division's inspection of that facility.*

RMA Response: We agree with the need for increased public information regarding food service facility. However, we partially disagree with this recommended approach to improve the provision of public information. Specifically, we disagree with the recommendation to the extent it suggests EHD develop a food service facility rating system based on a simplistic "A", "B", "C" system.

On April 14, 1998, EHD presented an issue paper on the Ventura County Food Protection Program to the Board of Supervisors. This issue paper discussed both "Grading" and alternative improved public disclosure methods. The Board agreed with staff that a simplistic grading/rating system was not warranted at that time. It was felt that until Statewide uniformity and application of mandatory food safety training and public disclosure were achieved, the costs of initiating these programs locally appeared to outweigh the benefits that may be derived. The Board affirmed the EHD Program as adopted on January 6, 1998, which included the following key elements:



- Expanded categories of food facilities based on risk of foodborne illness
- Tiering of fees based on level of risk and corresponding level of regulation and inspection frequency
- Provision of expanded training of food handlers, on a voluntary basis
- Enhanced training of staff and other personnel changes

To be very clear, we certainly agree with the public information component of this recommendation, including the requirement that an easily understood synopsis of the facility inspection be available at the food service facility. EHD is tracking pending legislation requiring each food service facility to post exactly such a notice to patrons. The legislation would mandate that the most recent inspection report be available, on-site, for review. This portion of the recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented on or before January 1, 2002, if the legislation is chaptered.

As mentioned in the Grand Jury's report, there was legislation introduced, passed, and vetoed in 1999 related to posting food service facility inspection information on the internet. Senator Sher has reintroduced this legislation this year as SB 180 which has been enrolled and sent to the Governor. This legislation not only calls for the posting of major violations on local and statewide web sites, but also will require that a copy of the most recent inspection report be maintained at the food service facility and that a notice advising patrons that the report is available for review be posted.

Regardless of the outcome of the legislation, EHD is in the process of developing a voluntary posting of inspection information at food facilities. This voluntary posting consists of two components, a window placard indicating the facility was substantially in compliance with state laws on the date inspected, and an inspection summary of the last inspection that is available for review by the public at the facility. In discussions with industry about this concept there was enthusiastic support.

Grand Jury Recommendation R-2: *The Division continue its practice of reporting facility closures on its web site, and augment the site with food service facility inspection summaries that support the rating displayed in the facility.*

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RMA Response: We agree. We plan to continue reporting food service facility closures on the EHD web site. EHD continues to update, on a daily basis, the food service facility closures on the EHD web site. In addition, EHD is working on augmenting the amount of information available on the EHD web site, including provision of an inspection summary; EHD expects to have implemented this recommendation within Fiscal Year 2000/2001.