MIDDLESEX-LONDON HEALTH UNIT

REPORT NO. 006-15

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2015 January 15

_____

SUMMARY INFORMATION REPORT FOR JANUARY 2015

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 006-15 re Information Summary Report for January and the attached appendices be received for information.

Key Points

- The DineSafe website has been updated and will be launched in early January 2015, and as of the summer of 2014, mobile food premises have been required to post DineSafe inspection summaries on-site.

- Standardized provincial food premises risk categorization tool to be implemented by all health units in Ontario beginning in January 2015 and all food premises in Middlesex-London to be risk assessed through the use of the new tool by June 30th, 2015.

Background

This report provides a summary of information from a number of Health Unit programs. Additional information is available upon request.

Dinesafe Update

The DineSafe food disclosure program provides inspection information for the public through the DineSafe website www.dinesafemiddlesexlondon.ca and through onsite posting of inspection summaries (signs). The main objective of DineSafe is to provide the public with quick and concise inspection results that can be used to inform dining decisions. Public Health Inspectors complete food safety inspections and post a colour coded sign that corresponds with the results generated from the inspection report. A summary of the inspection results is uploaded to the DineSafe website within 1 business day. Recent updates to the DineSafe program have allowed for greater accessibility to inspection results through improvements made in website enhancements and functionality and through the requirement for on-site posting of inspection summaries at mobile food premises.

The Middlesex- London DineSafe website, launched in 2010, was recently reviewed to determine the effectiveness in meeting the main program objective of informing the public on inspection results. Several opportunities for improvements were identified. In particular: making the website 'mobile device friendly'; providing a map option with colour coded signs incorporated onto the map; and better searching functionality. RES IM was contracted to implement these enhancements and the updated DineSafe website has been completed and is intended to be launched in early January 2015. The Environmental Health (food safety) team will continue to work with RES IM on any matters that may affect the functionality or displaying of food safety inspection results on the DineSafe website.
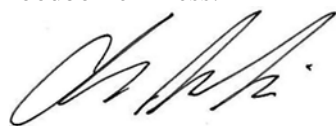
The posting of inspection summaries (signs) on site at mobile food premises was phased into DineSafe during the summer of 2014 and a communication was sent to all mobile food premises operators. All hot dog carts, food trucks and catering vehicles that operate within Middlesex-London will now be required to post a colour coded sign on site. This change is now in place for an anticipated increase in the number of mobile food premises that may occur with a potential City of London policy change related to the licencing of food trucks. The Environmental Health (food safety) team will continue to work towards fully integrating all food premises that receive a colour coded sign onto the DineSafe website by addressing logistical challenges that have been identified.

New Food Premises Risk Categorization Tool

The Food Safety Protocol under the Ontario Public Health Standards requires Boards of Health to conduct an annual risk assessment of all year-round food premises. Risk categorization of food premises is important from a resource standpoint because the risk category determines the inspection frequency. Currently, there are approximately 2,500 year round food premises in Middlesex-London. Historically, health units have assessed and assigned risk to food premises using standardized criteria. However, there has been some inconsistency across health unit jurisdictions in the relative weight given to each of these criteria. A consistently applied approach to risk categorization through standardized weighting of risk criteria will improve reporting accuracy for performance indicators across jurisdictions and ensure objectivity by minimizing any potential bias.

In early 2014, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) established a working group tasked with creating a standardized tool to guide health units in the decision making process for risk categorization. A scan of all 36 health units in Ontario revealed that there were slight differences across jurisdictions with regards to risk assessment methodology resulting in differences in risk categorization. Generally, it was determined that health units placed a greater emphasis on 'profile factors' for risk assessment criteria such as the types of food premises, types of foods being prepared and the nature of food preparation on-site, as opposed to 'performance factors' such as historical level of legislative compliance and food handler certification training, although these metrics were used by many health units. In addition, some health units utilized a more objective 'scoring' system while other health units assigned risk more subjectively.

In November 2014, the MOHLTC released a draft *Guidance Document for the Risk Categorization of Food Premises* and a draft risk categorization tool for review and comments from health units. MLHU staff provided feedback at that time and the revised tool (incorporating all health unit feedback) is anticipated to be delivered to all MOHs in early January 2015. The new tool will allow for greater inclusion of performance factors into the risk categorization process, assist health units to allocate resources more efficiently and according to demonstrated need, and reduce the risk of adverse health outcomes due to foodborne illness.

Christopher Mackie, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health