

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII'I
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'I



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STATE OF HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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In reply, please refer to:
File:

December 26, 2024

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi,
President and Members of the Senate
Thirty-third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura,
Speaker
and Members of the House of
Representatives
Thirty-third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 431
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, and Members of the Legislature:

For your information and consideration, I am transmitting a copy of the report of the Food Safety Branch (formerly Sanitation Branch) Annual Audit, Sanitation and Environmental Health Special Fund for Fiscal Year 2024, pursuant to Sections 321-27.5 and 321-27, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

In accordance with Section 93-16, Hawaii Revised Statutes, I am also informing you that the report may be viewed electronically at:

<https://health.hawaii.gov/opppd/departments-of-health-reports-to-2025-legislature/>

Sincerely,

Kenneth S. Fink, M.D., M.P.H., M.G.A.
Director of Health

Enclosures

- c: Legislative Reference Bureau
- Hawaii State Library System (2)
- Hamilton Library

**REPORT TO THE
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE
STATE OF HAWAII
2025**

Food Safety Branch (formerly Sanitation Branch) Annual
Audit
Sanitation and Environmental Health Special Fund
Fiscal Year 2024

**Pursuant to Chapters 321-27.5 and 321-27,
Hawaii Revised Statutes,
Requesting the Department of Health to Submit an
Annual Audit Report of the Sanitation Branch
And
Requesting the Department of Health to Submit a
Report on the Status of the
Sanitation and Environmental Health Education Fund**

**PREPARED BY:
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
STATE OF HAWAII**

December 2024

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a broad overview of the functional role and activities of the Food Safety Branch, formerly the Sanitation Branch, as required under Section 321-27.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), that states, “The Department shall perform annual audits of the sanitation branch to be completed by November 30 of each year, and shall include an audit of:

- 1) Fees collected;
- 2) The number and results of sanitation inspections;
- 3) The number of training seminars held; and
- 4) The cost of training personnel in the sanitation branch.”

This report is also being submitted under Section 321-27(d), HRS, which states that the Department “shall submit a report to the Legislature concerning the status of the Sanitation and Environmental Health Education Fund, including, but not limited to the number of monies taken in and expended from the fund, and the sources of receipts and uses of expenditures...”

BACKGROUND

The function of the Food Safety Branch is to promote and maintain a sanitary and healthful environment for the people and visitors of Hawaii by implementing legally required programs for:

- 1) Food protection.
- 2) Assessing and assuring that hospitals and medical facilities meet sanitation requirements.
- 3) Licensing of tattoo artists and embalmers; and
- 4) Regulating tattoo shops, mortuaries, and public swimming pools.

The Food Safety Branch focuses on its food protection program, which has evolved into a complex program concentrating on public health practices through education, partnerships, prevention, assessment, and compliance.

Food is a significant element of Hawaii’s multi-ethnic culture and is a principal attraction for visitors to Hawaii. Food contamination presents a great risk to public health. The Food Safety Branch protects residents and visitors from exposure to food borne illnesses by conducting inspections and assessments of food service establishments to ensure that the food served is safe to eat. In FY 24 the branch had 10,577 active food establishment permits statewide, which includes restaurants and all food purveyors.

In addition, the branch promotes food protection through education. The Food Safety Consultation and Education Program plays a vital role in preventing food borne illnesses by developing and implementing food safety surveillance and control plans and conducting educational activities to assist the food service industry and food handlers.

Staff training is also a significant element for maximizing efficiency and effectiveness to satisfy program performance objectives. Mechanisms are in place to provide continuing education as the branch updates and cross trains staff to keep up with technological and organizational changes.

FEES COLLECTED

Under Section 321-11.5, HRS, the Department collects fees for permits, licenses, inspections, various certificates, variances, investigations, and reviews. These fees are deposited into the Sanitation and Environmental Health Special Fund under Section 321-27(a), HRS that supports training for staff in the Environmental Health Services Division and food establishment personnel; as well as provides educational outreach to the public regarding food safety.

FY 24 Revenue was approximately \$3.54 million, which is up from the \$3.1 million collected in FY 23. This reflects a recovery from the pandemic. The current level of revenue is considered stable barring unforeseen events.

NUMBER AND RESULTS OF FOOD SAFETY BRANCH FOOD FACILITY INSPECTIONS

The Food Safety Branch currently permits 10,577 food establishments statewide.

Year	Inspections Conducted*	Violations
**FY24	4,956	1,188
FY 23	15,429	2,868
FY 22	15,680	2,956
FY 21	14,200	2,100
FY 20	10,200	2,300

*Inspections include routine and follow-up inspections

**Data from July 1, 2023 to Oct 31, 2023

Year	General Complaint Inspections	Food-Borne Illness Complaints*
**FY24	177	51
FY23	480	164
FY 22	461	156
FY 21	852	66
FY 20	900	13

*Complaints received internally from the Department of Health’s Disease Outbreak and Control Division

**Data from July 1, 2023 to Oct. 31, 2023

Year	Green Placard	Yellow Placard
**FY24	87%	13%
FY23	88%	12%
FY 22	88%	12%
FY 21	90%	10%
FY 20	86%	14%

**Data from July 1, 2023 to Oct. 31, 2023

In FY24, the Food Safety Branch terminated its contract with our IT vendor (Tyler Tech) on Dec 31, 2023, that handled all inspection, permitting and fiscal data due to performance issues. The program has reverted back to manual systems in the interim and will not be able to get complete FY 24 data electronically until after February of 2025 when our new IT vendor (HS GovTech) goes “live”. The new vendor is in the process of transferring all legacy data over to the new system so no historic data will be lost. FY23 saw normal productivity, mostly on Oahu, as the program conducted about 15,429 inspections, up from 15,680 total inspections in FY22, of which 12,041 (8,365 on Oahu) were routine food establishment inspections. Violation rate (Yellow Card issuance %) throughout the industry rose slightly to 12%. The increased focus on handwashing during the pandemic was probably the main reason for the reduction, as handwashing violations nationwide are one of the most frequently cited violations observed during routine inspections. Since then, food establishments are slipping back to old habits and less frequent handwashing is observed anecdotally. This may be the reason for the huge increases in food illness complaints from a historic low of 13 in FY20 to 66 in FY 21 and 164 in FY23.

The significant and steady reduction in the number of Yellow placards issued year over year is a direct result of the placarding program and the public posting of food inspection results. The paradigm shift in using governmental transparency to influence behavior in the food industry has been a very positive step forward and is changing the way industry looks at food safety.

NUMBER OF TRAINING SEMINARS HELD

	FY 24	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY23
Food Certification Workshops	0	14	9	0	0	0
Students Attended	N/A	303	349	N/A	N/A	N/A
Students Certified	N/A	303	349	N/A	N/A	N/A
% Passed	N/A	100%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Food Handlers Education Classes	283	448	242	567	360	285
Students Attended	4133	10201	3143	2129	3470	3709

Food Certification Workshops are 16-hour (2 days) classes that cover the principles of food safety and protection as it pertains to HAR 11-50 Food Safety Code. This workshop is equivalent to education typically required for all food managers in states and counties that mandate food safety training at the managerial level.

Food Handlers Education Classes are a 2-hour class designed to give basic instruction in food safety. Since 2017, HAR requires that all food establishments have always at least one employee available with a Food Handlers Certificate. The course addresses the four basic tenets of food safety. Clean, separate, cook and chill. The course is given at no charge and a course completion certificate is issued. The course utilizes hands on demonstrations and audience participation.

The DOH also recognizes many ANSI certified online providers that provide the mandated Food Handlers Certificates for low cost (\$10-\$15) and in multiple languages.

COST OF TRAINING BRANCH PERSONNEL

National Environmental Health Assoc Annual Education Conference New Orleans, Louisiana

Dates: July 31-Aug 3, 2023
Attendees: Env Health Program Manager
Three Food Safety Specialist IV's
Cost: Total cost was \$14,681 for Four attendees

Milk Plant Inspection Course Boise, Idaho

Dates: Aug 8 - 11, 2023
Attendees: Food Safety Specialist (FSS) III - Milk Specialist
Cost: Total cost was \$1,880

Western Assoc of Food and Drug Officials Conference Portland, Oregon

Dates: Sept 19 - 22, 2023
Attendees: EH Program Manager
Food Safety Specialist VI
Food Safety Specialist V
Cost: Total cost was \$ \$5,906 for 3 attendees

Milk Pasteurization Controls and Testing Course Arlington, Texas

Dates: Sept. 18-21, 2023
Attendees: Food Safety Specialist (FSS) III - Milk Specialist
Cost: Total cost was \$2,101

Pacific Rim Shellfish Conference Oakland, California

Dates: February 12-14, 2024
Attendees: Food Safety Specialist (FSS) IV -Shellfish Specialist
Cost: Total cost was \$2,115

Western Milk Seminar 2024

Golden, Colorado

Dates: April 22-25, 2025

Attendees: FSS III

Cost: \$2,005

Association of Food and Drug Officials

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dates: June 9-12, 2024

Attendees: EH Program Manager

FSS VI

FSS V

Cost: \$10,313 for 3 attendees

TOTAL COST FOR TRAINING FY 2024

\$39,001

STATUS OF THE SANITATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIAL FUND

Amount of moneys taken in: \$3,541,000

Amount expended: \$2,447,899

The sources of receipts and uses of expenditures are as enumerated in 321-27(a) and 321-27(b), HRS, respectively.