

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE	Subject: Christmas Safety Campaigns
From: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	
Date: 5th January, 1998. Ref: EMcC/MC	

PROPOSED DECISION

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the attached report on the Christmas Food and Toy Safety campaigns and approve the following recommendations viz:

1. Implementation of an annual, event driven, programme of safety campaigns starting with firework safety in November and continuing with food and toy safety through until Christmas.
2. The production of relevant consumer education packs and trader information leaflets.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The production of education and information packs represents a resource outlay which can be incorporated into the next Departmental budget.

REPORT

The festive period is a lucrative time for restaurateurs, but the potential for consumer detriment is increased as kitchens work under greater pressure and Christmas promotions run concurrently with standard menus.

The aim of the Christmas food safety campaign was to reduce the potential for food poisoning and overcharging in restaurants, so ensuring the large number of people using restaurants in North Lanarkshire over the festive period were properly protected.

In order to achieve, this one hundred and sixteen restaurants and pubs were visited by both Environmental Health and Trading Standards officers of the Department to enforce the full range of food hygiene, weights and measures and pricing legislation.

In addition to this, proactive steps to contain any potential food poisoning outbreak were taken by detailing suppliers, types of meat and poultry used and the number of meals expected to be served, as well as issuing instructions on the cooking and storage of meat and emphasising the need for training of temporary staff.

Eight premises were issued with formal warnings regarding infringements of the Weights and Measures and Consumer Protections Acts.

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The Christmas Toy Safety Campaign was targeted at the lower end of the market where it was assumed most problems would occur and the pre-Christmas toy sampling programme concentrated on market traders, fancy good shops and short termed lease shops.

Twenty-one toys were submitted for analysis, four of which failed to comply with the Toy Safety Regulations or the British Standard.

Two soft toys failed because the stuffing material presented a choking hazard, one toy had a sharp protruding edge and one projectile toy was unsafe because it was too powerful. One of these soft toys was being sold through a national retailer and in this instance national press coverage was deemed necessary so as to ensure that members of the public were made aware of the potential hazard. All affected toys were immediately withdrawn from sale in North Lanarkshire.

Suppliers, importers and manufacturers were also traced and the Trading Standards Departments in these areas informed of the findings of the analysis.

This campaign aimed not only to reduce the number of unsafe toys for sale in North Lanarkshire by enforcing toy safety legislation but also to educate the trade, particularly those selling toys only at the lucrative Christmas period. To this end, an information leaflet clearly detailing how to comply with the law was distributed to seventy-eight market traders and small scale retailers.

SUMMARY

In both campaigns the response to the trader education programme was enthusiastic.

The campaigns were given publicity in the local press with the aid of the Public Relations Section and so helped raise awareness of these issues in the conscienceness.

No complaints relating to food poisoning or overcharging in restaurants have yet been received.

Complaints regarding toys cannot be expected until after Christmas, however it is hoped that the continuation of these education and enforcement campaigns will reduce such statistics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To note the report.

M'Kenzie L. Hattory