

AUDITOR GENERAL

Halifax Regional Municipality

Management of the Fire Inspection Program Audit

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Audit Overview

- Failing to effectively manage important aspects of Fire Inspection Program
- Oversight needs improvement
- Failing to meet legislative obligations
 - Some steps to address but need detailed plans
- Inspection follow up not always timely



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Oversight – Detailed Results

- Significant improvement needed
- Management had concerns with Fire Prevention Division's organizational structure
 - Ability to meet inspection mandate
- 2019 created fire inspector positions
 - August 2021 8 fire inspectors
 - Additional structure changes planned
- Management believe more fire inspection staff needed
 - But don't know how many
 - No detailed plans or timelines

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Oversight – Detailed Results

- Identified the fire inspection program as a risk area
 - No comprehensive plans to address
 - Do not know how often buildings should be inspected
- Performing inspections enforces fire code
- Periodic fire inspections educate property and business owners



Timeliness of Inspections – Detailed Results

- Failure to manage and meet legislative responsibilities
- Fire inspections on many buildings not timely
 - 40% of inspections sampled not on time
- Regulations require certain buildings be inspected every three years
 - 45% of inspections sampled were late
 - Nine of 20 not inspected within three-year requirement



Timeliness of Inspections – Detailed Results

- Other building types system of inspections
- Management determined inspection frequencies
 - Does not know if frequencies are appropriate
- Sample of 38 inspections tested against these timelines
 - 37% did not meet established 2009 timelines



Timeliness of Inspections – Detailed Results

- Halifax Fire does not have a reliable list of inspectable buildings
- 2019 list
 - · Manually created
 - Risk not complete
 - Has not been updated
 - But used to schedule inspections
- New HRM building permitting system December 2020
 - Halifax Fire's system not updated with new property data since

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Compliance Orders and Follow up – Detailed Results

- Sample: 24 inspections with violations
 - Six No orders-to-comply
- Most violations followed up
 - Not always timely
- Sampled 30 inspections completed by fire inspection staff
 - 24 noted violations
 - One not followed up
 - Four long delays
- Sampled 30 limited-scope fire inspections
 - 25 of 30 noted violations
 - All followed up
 - Nine not timely



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Compliance Orders and Follow up – Detailed Results

- Some follow up of limited-scope inspections completed by fire inspection staff
 - No process to prioritize these items
- 16 of 25 limited-scope fire inspections in our sample escalated to fire inspection staff for follow up
 - Follow up not timely
 - Average follow up 97 days
 - One case no follow up for 16 months



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Quality Assurance – Detailed Results

- Limited quality assurance to confirm fire inspections properly completed and documented
 - Tracks pending inspections; follows up with staff
 - No regular review to confirm completed properly
- No consistent understanding of documentation required in hard copy inspection files
- Policies and procedures outdated
 - Most not reviewed or revised since 2012
 - Do not reflect current operations



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Staff Productivity – Detailed Results

- Limited management of staff productivity
 - Have not determined number inspections staff should complete
 - Management has not given fire inspection staff direction on prioritizing most work
 - 2019 inspection lists
 - Each had hundreds of buildings





Staff and Training – Detailed Results

- Fire inspection staff training requirements identified
 - Limited course offerings
 - Six years to complete
- No concrete plans for solutions
- 2019 created new fire inspector position
 - Required to have building official or fire inspector certification on hire



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Performance Indicators – Detailed Results

- Single performance indicator for Fire Prevention Division
 - Percentage are completed legislated inspections
- Reported in Halifax Fire's business plan to Regional Council
 - No support for calculation
- Senior management do not know if target is reasonable
- Target is low
 - 1/5 to 1/3 of what Halifax Fire is required to complete
 - Includes limited-scope inspections carried out by operational fire officers
- No other performance indicators for Division

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Other Matters

- Poor Communication between Halifax Fire, and Planning and Development
- Halifax Fire management said certain subdivisions built without appropriate fire safety specifications
- Planning and Development management said they were not aware of these concerns
- Looked at three subdivision approvals
 - Two provided to Halifax Fire
 - Only one with feedback or concerns noted
 - No documentation of how addressed
- No list with plans for when and where dry hydrants will be installed

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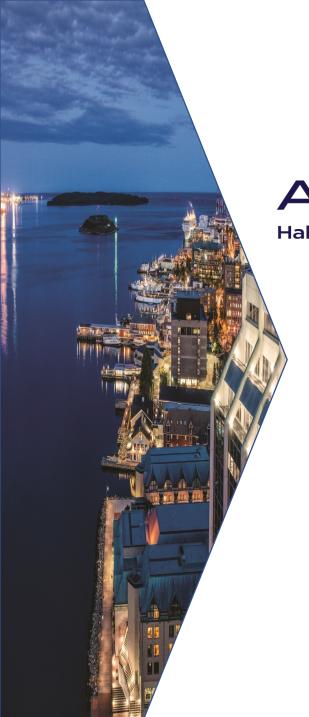
Wrap Up

14 Recommendations

All accepted by management

Timely action important to meet legislated obligations and enforce fire code

Follow up in 18 months



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Questions?