

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The practice of Occupational Safety and Health is generally concerned with ensuring the overall safety, health and wellbeing of employees in all workplaces and occupations through the anticipation, recognition, evaluation and control of hazards and risk factors arising in or from workplaces and work related activities; whilst taking into account the possible impact on the surrounding communities and the general public from work and workplace related activities.

Background

As part of its election campaign pledges, the Progressive Labour Party (PLP) before forming the Government and as an objective to be achieved within the first one hundred (100) days of taking Office declared that it would have execute plans to bring immediate change to Bermuda's Society. As part of this undertaking; the PLP promised to conduct an urgent review of Health and Safety in all Public Schools. This was in order to ensure that all students and teachers are learning and working in a safe and healthy environment.

To this end, and in response to the Government's commitment; the Office of the Safety and Health Coordinator under the Cabinet Office was charged with leading and executing this initiative and ensuring that same was satisfactorily completed.

The Safety and Health Coordinator's Office commenced field work and related logistical arrangements relative to the process of inspecting all public schools and their related facilities on 21st August 2017. Actual field work inspection and related activities were completed on 13th October 2017.

Public schools in Bermuda are categorized in different categories, namely Pre-Schools, Primary, Middle and Senior High Schools. The total number of schools within each broad category varied and are as follows:

Categories of School	Total Number
Pre-School	10
Primary	18
Middle	5
Senior High	2
Total	35

Challenges

The start of field work and related activities were hampered in many respects and hence lasted longer than was initially anticipated. Primary among the challenges was the initial unavailability of a motor vehicle to consistently conduct all field work exercises, however, this was later overcome with the intervention of the Deputy Head of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office.

Another challenge related to the unavailability of some school Principals and related Administrative Officers and to facilitate the inspection of their schools on the assigned dates as were previously agreed. However, the Office of the Safety and Health Coordinator was able to revise the initial inspection schedule and rescheduled the inspections for such schools at a later date. Relative to this, was that the areas of some schools were found to be locked-up and school Principals and other administrative officers having no access or key to such areas of their schools.

Some schools were also in session and this posed added challenges and resulted in additional delays, though understandable. However, in an effort to minimize disruptions to the school operations and the teaching learning process as much as possible, flexibility had to be maintained in the timetabling for the completion of inspections at such schools. Further challenges, related to the data entry activities in preparation for the drafting of final reports. However, this challenge was again overcome with the intervention of the Deputy Head of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office. Related challenges to completing further inspections at other schools were connected with the start of significant clean-up and maintenance repair works that had gotten underway prior to the completion of all inspections. Yet, again such works forced an extension of time for the completion of the inspections.

In spite of all the challenges experienced, all the field work activities were successfully completed although creative ways had to be found to ensure same.

Generation of Reports

At the conclusion of inspection activities; a general high-level Schools Inspection Summary Report of major findings relative to all schools was generated and submitted to the Deputy Head of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office on 31st October 2017 for forwarding to the Minister of Government Reform with Responsibility for the Cabinet Office as means of update, as well as, for her perusal and other use as might have been considered necessary.

Subsequent to the submission to the Minister; a draft Schools Inspection Summary Report was submitted to the Ministry of Public Works (Estates/Building Section) and the Ministry of Education (Facilities Department) Technical teams for their review and input on 23rd January 2018.

A review meeting was later held with the combined technical teams from the Ministries of Education and Public Works on 28th February 2018 to gather their feedback on the draft report findings, as well as, to clarify any matters arising therefrom in support of and determination of next steps towards the completion of the final report (s).

From the meeting with the combined technical teams from both the Ministry of Education and Public Works; the technical teams requested that the Schools Inspection Summary Report be broken down into and that detailed individual reports for each school be generated.

This was agreed to by the Office of the Safety and Health Coordinator. However, it was clearly indicated that relative to the new details being requested and considering resource constraints; that detailed reports for each school could not and would not have been completed before 30th June 2018 at the earliest.

To this end, a detailed report for each school each school was completed at the end of the timeline initially indicated and submissions made to the Chief Surveyor within the Ministry of Public Works and the Acting Facilities Manager within the Ministry of Education on 02nd July 2018.

Summary of Findings

Throughout and at the close of inspection activities; numerous shortcomings relating to the overall quality and scope of cleaning, upkeep and maintenance in tandem with improper modus operandi practices, and other omissions by school administrators, academic and custodial staff at the respective schools were observed and documented. There were also several breaches of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, 1982 and the enabling Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 2009 that were noted.

Generally, all schools were deemed to be relatively safe, within time and scope comparative to their operations and related practices. However, all of the schools had challenges relating to sanitation and hygiene, maintenance and upkeep of their buildings and related facilities. Notwithstanding same, the majority of findings were not considered significant enough to be deemed to be posing any great immediate threat to the safety, health and wellbeing of teachers or students at the time of inspection, except where and as noted otherwise.

Notwithstanding the foregone, the litany and variety of findings are indicative of the need to ensure that every school undergoes consistent routine, scheduled and timely maintenance and repair activities towards ensuring that school are being optimally cleaned, upkeep and maintained in an acceptable state on a sustained basis to help ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of teachers and students alike.

Accordingly, all the major findings outlined in the individual reports for each must be given urgent and priority attention, as well as, all the minor findings outlined are required to be satisfactorily addressed or otherwise resolved before they start to pose or morphed into greater occupational safety and health challenges or transition from latent to active and more serious hazards and increase risk.

All schools had noted findings related to the following:

- Poor Housekeeping and Improper Storage - generally refers to the overall and noted instances of inappropriate means and methods of storage of materials and supplies, as well as, poor or unsatisfactory maintenance and upkeep of school plants and their supporting facilities and related apparatus
- Poor hygiene and sanitation - generally refers to poor or otherwise improper cleaning of school plant and facilities to achieve an acceptable or satisfactory quality level of cleaning, sanitation and hygiene – relative to daily and ongoing cleaning efforts and practices.
- No currently established and efficiently function workplace safety and health committees
- Non-availability of MSDS/SDS (Material Safety Data Sheets/Safety Data Sheets) for all chemical substances and materials, solutions and related supplies found in each school. This compounded by the improper use of these such items, inclusive some chemicals that were previously recommended for discontinued use still being supplied to and are being used by the custodial staff assigned to each school.
- Excessive accumulation and hoarding of educational materials and supplies – relative to their, improper storage, cleaning, upkeep and maintenance. The non-cleaning, upkeep and maintenance of these items and excesses continue to pose challenges towards achieving improvements in cleaning, hygiene and sanitation and good indoor air quality. In many instances, facilitating mould growth.
- The majority of First Aid and Medical Supplies Kits at most schools were non-compliant with regulatory requirements. Additionally, the credentials of designated First Aiders were not verifiable as they were not available on file for inspection. At other times, such personnel admitted to their credentials having been expired.
- Improper inspection and servicing of Fire Extinguishers and other Fire Safety devices and supporting apparatus. These are items were being inspected and service-checked once per year for the most part. However, they are required to be inspected and service-checked at least twice per year.
- All school facilities exhibited some sign or degree of mould contamination (some more than others) within and across different areas of buildings and related facilities. However, no school had identified mould problems sufficient or significant enough at the time of inspection to warrant any major concern or that could be considered to and or likely posing any immediate or imminent risks to the safety, health and wellbeing of students or teachers at the time of inspection. However, the extent to which mould contamination was identified can be significantly reduce through improved daily cleaning (in scope and quality), discontinuation of

poor housekeeping and improper storage practices, reduction in the quantity of items, materials and supplies being stored or being kept within the various areas throughout the schools.

- Indoor air quality at most the schools were considered satisfactory generally. However, there were specific points and locations within each school where indoor air quality is required to be improved.
- Two Schools were identified with damaged or otherwise exposed asbestos material that would be required to be remediated. However, the location of the asbestos material at one school was very small and could be removed overnight without any disruption to the school's operation. At the other, the asbestos identified was damaged (i.e. fraying with a high potential for fibres to become airborne and possibly transported outside of the immediate area) and immediate steps were taken to remove occupants from the location and sealed the area pending remediation work. The asbestos was not in an area generally accessed by students or academic personnel but was sufficiently close enough to warrant the immediate closure and sealing of the area out of an abundance of caution, as well as, to prevent any potential for unsuspecting personnel exposures.
- The overall level of security at all schools was deemed insufficient and a comprehensive review of the current security arrangements should be undertaken relative to proper and complete perimeter fencing, access and exit controls for buildings and visitor control access, lighting, electronic security monitoring (CCTV), in place security personnel training and other related matters at all schools should be undertaken as a matter of priority.
- Poor pest control management; generally related to roach, ants and termite infestations within school facilities. Some schools also had incidences of rodent infestations; however, such instances were not overly pervasive but appeared to be localized to the precise locations where such instances were observed and noted. In some instances, these issues are related to the modus operandi of the school administrators and student activities.
- Poor cleaning and upkeep of HVAC systems (inclusive of central, split and cassette air conditioning systems) and supporting apparatus. These systems are required to be inspected and service-checked in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and or industry best practices.
- Roof/ceiling leaks. The majority of schools had some sections with signs of water and or moisture intrusion which could either be from actual ceiling leaks, fugitive escape of condensate water or water entering from elsewhere. All indicative areas should be investigated and the necessary repairs undertaken accordingly.
- The majority of schools had issues relating to the improper layout and alignment of electrical and or information and communication technology wires. These continue to pose trip and fall hazards and must be sorted, properly aligned and controlled. Additionally, there is an inherent practice of

electrical extension cords being used as permanent electrical wiring options. Such practices must be prohibited and otherwise be controlled given the potential risks for circuit overloading, and resultant fire risks.