



CITY OF TAMPA

Pam Iorio, Mayor

Internal Audit Department

Wayne Boytim, Acting Internal Audit Director

February 17, 2005

Honorable Pam Iorio
Mayor, City of Tampa
1 City Hall Plaza
Tampa, Florida

RE: Fire Marshal, Audit 04-05

Dear Mayor Iorio:

Attached is the Internal Audit Department's report on the Fire Marshal.

We thank the management and staff of the Fire Marshal's Office for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.

Sincerely,

Wayne Boytim
Acting Internal Audit Director

cc: Dennis Jones, Fire Chief
Darrell Smith, Chief of Staff
Gary Gonzalez, Fire Marshal

**TAMPA FIRE RESCUE
FIRE MARSHAL
AUDIT 04-05
FEBRUARY 17, 2005**

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Auditor

Audit Supervisor

Audit Director

**TAMPA FIRE RESCUE
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INTRODUCTION

The Fire Prevention Bureau (the Bureau) is directed by the Fire Marshal and is a unit of Tampa Fire Rescue. The Bureau is responsible for:

- Existing Construction. Inspection of existing structures on a periodic basis and when complaints are made.
- New Construction. Plans examination and inspection of new construction projects.
- Fire/Arson Investigations. Investigates the origin and cause of fires

Existing buildings are inspected on a periodic basis, with emphasis on high-risk structures such as nursing homes, high rises, public assembly sites, and child care facilities. Annual inspection of Public Schools is mandated by Florida Statutes.

City Code Sec. 11-27 provides:

“All commercial establishments, including residential structures of three (3) or more dwelling units, are subject to periodic fire code compliance inspections...”

Section 100.09 of Tampa Fire Rescue’s Rules and Regulations states in part:

“The function of the Fire Prevention Division shall be: Inspect all buildings and premises, except the interior of private dwellings, as often as may be necessary for the purpose of ascertaining and causing to be corrected all conditions liable to cause fire or endanger life.”

Determination of which buildings are to be inspected is largely left to the individual Inspectors. A database, ASTRA, is currently being implemented to assist in tracking inspections.

Inspections are billed using the City’s Miscellaneous Accounts Receivable System (MARS).

STATISTICS¹

T-1 Targets	9
T-1 Schools-Public ²	111
T-1 Schools-Private	33
T-2 Targets	202

All T-1 Targets require annual inspection. T-2 Targets require biannual inspection.

Buildings in Database (approx)	13,600
Full Code Compliance Inspections (approx) performed annually	1,500

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

This audit was conducted in accordance with the Internal Audit Department's FY04 Audit Agenda. The objectives of this audit were to:

1. Determine if public and private schools are being inspected in accordance with State Fire Marshal requirements and local policy;
2. Determine if Fire Inspections were being performed in accordance with existing requirements;
3. Determine status of implementation of the ASTRA database and evaluate its effectiveness as a management tool;
4. Determine if inspection fees were being properly assessed, collected and controlled. (Other collections, such as false alarms, were not included.)

STATEMENT OF SCOPE

Based on the work performed during the preliminary survey and the assessment of risk, the audit period covered the operations of the Fire Marshal Bureau from October 1, 2003 to September 30, 2004. This did not preclude reviewing earlier periods in order to determine when inspections were last performed. Events occurring during field work were considered if material. Source documentation was obtained from the Bureau, the City's Information Technology Section and from the School District. Original records as well as copies were used as evidence and verified through physical examination.

¹ Target definition were recently changed, comparison with prior years is not meaningful.

² Includes Charter Schools and Ancillary Buildings

STATEMENT OF METHODOLOGY

The ASTRA database was determined to be incomplete and unreliable (Conclusion 3, below). Inspection records for all T-1 Targets (including all Public and Private Schools) were reviewed. A random sample was taken of T-2 Targets. Hard copy files were reviewed in all cases. Listings for Public and Private schools were obtained from School District of Hillsborough County sources in order to test for the database for completeness.

With respect to Inspection Fees, the City's Miscellaneous Accounts Receivable System (MARS) was utilized. Limitations of that system are addressed later.

STATEMENT OF AUDITING STANDARDS

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to afford a reasonable basis for our judgments and conclusions regarding the organization, program, activity or function under audit. An audit also includes assessments of applicable internal controls and compliance with requirements of laws and regulations when necessary to satisfy the audit objectives. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the test work performed and the audit findings noted below, we conclude that:

1. All Public Schools³ were inspected in accordance with State requirements. Hillsborough Community College has not been inspected in accordance with the State Requirements. A few Private Schools had not been inspected in accordance with the Bureau's stated goal;
2. The majority of other Target buildings were not inspected in accordance with stated goals. Reinspections of buildings with deficiencies were frequently not made in a timely manner;
3. The ASTRA database is incomplete and inaccurate, and cannot be relied upon for audit or operational needs;
4. The billing and collection system has improved significantly since the last audit.

While the findings discussed below may not, individually or in the aggregate, significantly impair the operations of the Fire Prevention Bureau, they do present risks that can be more effectively controlled.

³ Including Charter Schools and Ancillary Buildings

NOTEWORTHY ACCOMPLISHMENT

Audit 02-07 reported that collections were running 76% of on billings for calendar years 2000 and 2001. It also noted that billings were not being done every month.

Since February, 2002 billings have been made every month. Collections as a percentage of billings for the three year period ending September 30, 2004 were just under 90%. This was a result of an aggressive billing and collection effort by Bureau staff.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Public Schools, including Charter Schools and ancillary buildings, and Community Colleges are required to be inspected annually by the Bureau under Fla. Stat. ch. 1013.12. We found that Public Schools had been inspected in accordance with the Statute. The Bureau has been turning reports over to the School District for remediation of deficiencies. Recent interpretations by the State Fire Marshal indicate that the Bureau should now be performing reinspections when deficiencies are found, and also that the inspections be performed once each State Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30).

Hillsborough Community College has not had a Full Code Compliance Inspection (FCCI) in recent years. This includes both the Dale Mabry and the Ybor Campuses. Inspections of parts of the campuses have been made in response to complaints.

Although not required by the Statute, the Bureau has a stated policy that Private Schools will be inspected at the same level as required for Public Schools. The inventory of Private Schools in the City is not accurate or complete. The database includes a number of buildings (e.g., primarily day care centers), that should not included, and excluded 5 Private Schools. Of those 5 schools, 2 had current inspections even though they were misclassified; the other 3 were last inspected in 1999 or 2000. The Bureau has been given the names of these schools.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Hillsborough Community College should be added to the school database and inspected in accordance with the Statute.

AUDITEE RESPONSE

We agree with this recommendation. Hillsborough Community College has been added to our school inspection database.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Private Schools database needs to be updated. Schools without current inspections should be inspected.

AUDITEE RESPONSE

We agree with this recommendation. We are in the process of completing our database of private schools. It is our desire to inspect private schools annually.

OTHER TARGET BUILDINGS

T-1 Buildings

This category includes private universities and certain entertainment facilities.

After some changes were made by the Bureau, there were only nine T-1 target buildings in the database. We found:

- 3 were in full compliance.
- 1 had been inspected within the last year, but not reinspected.
- 2 were past due by 1 to 2 years, including one in which the reinspection was not done for 8 months.
- 1 had not been inspected in 7 years.
- 2 had not been inspected in over 10 years.

4 of the above were reclassified as non target buildings by the Bureau during the final stages of this audit. We consider them to be deficiencies as they were classified as target buildings during the audit period.

T-2 Buildings

This category includes high rise offices, hotels and multi-family residences.

There were 202 T-2 buildings requiring bi-annual FCCI's. We drew a random sample of 42 buildings. Paper files were pulled for each of these buildings and inspection reports reviewed. Of the 42 buildings in the sample, we found:

- 17 had been properly inspected and reinspected (when required).
- 18 buildings had not been inspected within the prescribed time frames. This includes two major hospitals for which there is no documentation that a full inspection has been performed. (Partial inspections for specific reasons are documented.) Some of these buildings had not been inspected in over 5 years.
- 7 had been inspected within the prescribed time frames but were not properly reinspected.

Inspections

Based upon ASTRA database reports, the Bureau represented that 58% of target buildings were inspected within the requirements. The date used to determine whether inspections were current was not necessarily an FCCI, as explained later in this report. Reinspections were not addressed. This is consistent with our sample.

Eight positions were assigned to existing buildings during the audit period; 5 Inspectors and 3 Assistant Inspectors. However, all were not filled

The Bureau considers personnel shortages and its other responsibilities to be the main reasons for its inability to perform Target inspections in a timely manner. There are about 360 target buildings (including schools), about 150 requiring annual inspections and the balance requiring biennial inspections. This means about 260 FCCI's are needed each year. Reinspections take additional time, but not as much time as the original inspection since it is only necessary to look at the deficiencies, not the whole building.

Target inspections typically take 1 to 3 hours, including most of the paperwork, but not travel. Only 5 target inspections per week would be necessary to remain within Bureau goals.

We noted a number of non-target inspections taking place, and questioned why these were being done when target inspections were behind schedule. It was represented that there was a need to differentiate between responsibilities of Inspectors and Assistant Inspectors. Generally, Assistant Inspectors do not inspect target buildings; they inspect other buildings of lower priority.

We suggested that the differentiation be made only with respect to T-1 buildings, which would allow Assistant Inspectors to address the T-2's. The Bureau indicated that this might be a workable solution to covering target buildings while maintaining the differentiation. The Bureau represents that some or all of the Assistant Inspectors are capable of performing at least some of the T-2 inspections.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Target buildings which are past due should be scheduled for inspection as soon as possible. Whether Assistant Inspectors may inspect T-2 buildings should be determined.

AUDITEE RESPONSE

We agree with this recommendation. Target 1 and 2 buildings will be given priority. The idea of using F-3 inspectors to accomplish T2 inspections is a good one and will be implemented, contingent upon the timely filling of existing budgeted positions. We expect to see a positive shift in our target completion percentage during the next six-month period.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Department should review the Bureau's operations and prioritize its duties. Some of its additional responsibilities may need to be shifted to other sections

AUDITEE RESPONSE

We agree with this recommendation. A review of each inspector's responsibilities should help with the prioritization and assignment of duties.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Reinspections should be performed within a reasonable period after the date set for correction of the deficiency.

AUDITEE RESPONSE

We agree with this recommendation. The division policy of a 30-day reinspection timetable will be enforced. The degree of compliance will be contingent upon the filling of currently budgeted positions. As of today's date, three of eight positions are still vacant.

ASTRA DATABASE

The Bureau began the process of implementing a new database program, ASTRA, in February, 2003. The old database was in Microsoft Access® and was manually converted into ASTRA. It appears that ASTRA may be a useful tool if the data were reliable.

There are many incomplete, misclassified and out of date items in ASTRA that it cannot be relied upon to manage Fire Inspections. One of the reports that is regularly produced indicates a date of last activity, which could be an FCCI, a fire drill, permit, lecture or partial inspection. (The type of activity is indicated.) The date of last inspection is not indicated in this report if there was a later activity other than an FCCI. The Bureau appears to be using the date of last activity in calculating compliance, which may not be accurate.

The Bureau has referred to ASTRA as a “work in progress”. With fewer than 400 target buildings, it appears that the database could have been brought up to date in the last 18 months for Target buildings. Only one person in the Bureau is sufficiently knowledgeable about ASTRA to customize reports. He is retiring in a few months.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The ASTRA database should be evaluated for future use. If the program is considered usable, then data elements need to be updated and corrected. Target buildings should be updated first.

Additional personnel should be trained to use ASTRA, if it is retained. Ideally, Inspectors should be able to access records of buildings for which they have responsibility.

AUDITEE RESPONSE

We agree with this recommendation. We believe the program is usable as a viable tool of management. We have already updated many of the target building classifications and will continue to refine the data. The computer training of additional personnel has already taken place and will continue.