



**Hillsborough
County Florida**

**Board of County Commissioners
Internal Audit Department**

**FIRE CODE VIOLATION COMMUNICATION AND REMEDIATION FUNCTION FOR
PROPERTIES UNDER THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**Report # 16-01
November 16, 2016**



TO: Commissioner Kevin Beckner
Commissioner Victor Crist
Commissioner Ken Hagan
Commissioner Al Higginbotham
Commissioner Lesley "Les" Miller Jr.
Commissioner Sandra Murman
Commissioner Stacy White

FROM: Peggy Caskey, Internal Auditor

DATE: November 16, 2016

SUBJECT: Fire Code Violation Communication and Remediation Function for Properties under the Board of County Commissioners, Report #16-01

The Audit Team performed an audit of the fire code violation communication and remediation function for properties managed and owned under the responsibility of the Board of County Commissioners. Response to the Audit Team's recommendation was received from the Deputy County Administrator. Management's response follows the audit comment and recommendation.

The purpose of this Report is to provide management independent, objective analysis, recommendations, counsel, and information concerning the activities reviewed. As such, this report is not an appraisal or rating of management.

Although the Audit Team exercised due professional care in the performance of this audit, this should not be construed to mean that unreported noncompliance or irregularities do not exist. The deterrence of fraud and/or employee abuse is the responsibility of management. Audit procedures alone, even when carried out with professional care, do not guarantee that fraud or abuse will be detected.

I appreciate the cooperation and professional courtesies extended to the Audit Team by the Fire Rescue, Fire Marshal, Children's Services, Library Services, and Parks & Recreation personnel during this audit.

Sincerely,

Peggy Caskey, CIA, CISA, CFE
Internal Auditor

CC: Mike Merrill, County Administrator
Carl Harness, Chief Human Services Administrator
Greg Horwedel, Deputy County Administrator
Dennis Jones, Fire Chief
Chip Fletcher, County Attorney

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
BACKGROUND INFORMATION.....	1
OBJECTIVE.....	2
SCOPE.....	2
OVERALL EVALUATION.....	2
OPINION.....	3
AUDITED BY.....	3
AUDIT COMMENT 1 & RECOMMENDATION	4
EXHIBIT 1 – MANAGEMENT REMEDIATION PLAN TABLE	8
EXHIBIT 2 - MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	9

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Fire Marshal Office's Fire and Safety Inspection Process

Per Fire Rescue Ordinance 87-40, all properties in unincorporated Hillsborough County (which includes properties managed and owned under the responsibility of the Board of County Commissioners) are subject to periodic fire safety inspection by the Fire Marshal. The inspection criteria and cycles are denoted by risk priority in Policy #214, Occupancy Risk Assessment and Inspection Cycles. Per this Policy, each occupancy is scheduled for inspection at least once every five years on an 18-month cycle as shown in the table below.

Priority One	Priority Two	Priority Three
100% inspected every 18 month cycle	50% inspected every 18 month cycle	33% inspected every 18 month cycle
For example, assisted living facilities, group homes, adult and child care facilities, nursing homes, private schools, hospitals, assembly occupancies with occupant loads of 300 or more, and high rise occupancies.	For example, occupancies other than one and two family dwellings that do not meet Priority One criteria but are 5001 sq. ft. or greater, and assembly occupancies with an occupant load between 50 and 299.	For example, any occupancy other than one and two family dwellings that do not meet either Priority One or Two criteria with square footage below 5,000.

All properties that are subject to fire safety inspection are maintained in the Hillsborough County Fire Rescue's Fire Resource Management System (RMS) and are organized by risk priority and location zone. As of July 29, 2016, there were 26 fire code inspectors comprised of 24 field inspectors and two plans examiners. Each fire code inspector is assigned a zone.

When a fire code violation is identified during a routine periodic inspection, the details are documented in the Resource Management System. The inspector uses professional judgment based on the severity of the violation to determine the remediation time allowed before a re-inspection is scheduled and performed. Per management, these re-inspections are normally performed within two weeks to six months. Per Administrative Directive #CS-17, Inspection Fee Schedule, tenants are not charged a fee for the first re-inspection. Fees are assessed for second and third re-inspections. Violations that are not remediated after the third re-inspection are referred by the Fire Marshal to the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners' Code Enforcement Board (CEB). Inspection and violation fees are not assessed on the County's fire stations because the Fire Rescue Department would be billing itself.

The Resource Management System currently in use to manage fire code inspections and violations is outdated. System limitations include an inability to schedule optimal routing of inspections and generate reports for management decision making. Software malfunctions often require manual workarounds. In fiscal year 2016, Fire Rescue contracted with Raxar Technology Corporation to implement a new fire code inspection, maintenance and reporting system called GRAiT to replace the current Resource Management System. Full implementation of this new system is projected for completion in November 2016.

Because the Fire Marshal's fire and safety inspection process in the fire safety inspection life cycle was being re-engineered during the time of the audit, the Internal Auditor postponed this part of the audit until a later date.

Fire Code Violation Communication and Remediation Function for Properties Under the Board of County Commissioners

Generally, when a property managed and owned under the responsibility of the Board of County Commissioners (such as a child care facility, fire station, library or, park) is inspected for fire safety, the inspection report is received and signed by a person occupying the property at the time of inspection (such as a department manager or lessee). If a person occupying a property is unavailable at the time of inspection, the inspection report is left at the property unsigned. The property occupant is accountable for remediating the fire code violation. Some remediation is performed by County personnel and some requires services from outsourced providers.

This function is decentralized. There is no organization-wide formal process or written guiding principles (such as policies and procedures). The control environment is fragmented and not uniform. The fire code violation communication and remediation function is distinct for each property (or department/business unit).

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this audit was to determine the maturity of the fire code violation communication and remediation function's control environment as it pertains to protecting the Board of County Commissioners' personnel and assets.

SCOPE

The audit was conducted using best audit practices and performed to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for the audit comments and conclusions based on the audit objective. Internal Audit believes that the evidence obtained provides this reasonable basis.

The scope of work was limited to the population of owned and managed properties under the responsibility of the Board of County Commissioners that received a fire code violation between January 1, 2016, and June 30, 2016, and violations identified prior to January 1, 2016, that remained open on June 30, 2016. The Audit team evaluated these fire code violations for adequate communication and timely remediation.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Children's Services, Fire Rescue, Fire Marshal, Library Services, and Parks & Recreation Departments gave the Audit Team full, free and unrestricted access to all activities, records, property, and personnel necessary to accomplish the stated objective of this audit engagement. These Departments also provided the necessary assistance to effectively perform the audit efficiently. The assisting personnel were receptive to the Audit Team's recommendations for enhancing overall operations.

AUDIT COMMENT	CONCLUSION OF OBJECTIVE	PAGE
1	The control environment for the fire code violation communication and remediation function for properties under the Board of County Commissioners is at the informal control maturity level. The control structure is not mature enough to consistently protect the Board of County Commissioners' personnel and assets.	4

OPINION

The fire code violation communication and remediation function throughout the Board of County Commissioners' organization is at the informal control maturity level. Controls are fragmented and the response to fire code violations is managed in silos. There is a high potential for errors and higher costs due to: manual processes; falling short in communicating violations to the appropriate level of management; and in some instances, untimely corrective action to remediate fire code violations.

Test results of data subsequent to January 1, 2016, indicate that recent operational improvements such as changes in management, implementation of the Fire Rescue Department's Station Maintenance and Repair Ticket System (SMART), and the Fire Rescue Department's recent purchase of the GRAiT system, are enhancing overall operations. These are a strong demonstration of being proactive and responsive to historical operational deficiencies.

Looking forward, the GRAiT system has automated features that are capable of enhancing overall organization-wide operations under the Board of County Commissioners. This new system combined with organizational process improvements could quickly mature the fire code violation communication and remediation function at minimal additional cost to the County and without need to hire additional personnel. The resulting function will likely enhance the protection of the organization's personnel and assets.

The exit conference was held on September 30, 2016.

Other minor concerns not included in this report were communicated to management and/or corrected during fieldwork.

AUDITED BY

Peggy Caskey, CIA, CISA, CFE, Internal Auditor

Melinda Jenzarli, CIA, CISA, CFE, CPA, MBA, Lead Internal Auditor

Renee Giambra, CIA, CPA (HI), Staff Internal Auditor

AUDIT COMMENT 1 & RECOMMENDATION

AUDIT OBJECTIVE

The objective of this audit was to determine the maturity of the fire code violation communication and remediation function's control environment as it pertains to protecting the Board of County Commissioners' personnel and assets.

AUDIT TESTING

The Audit Team received a data extract from the Resource Management System of the population of owned and managed properties under the responsibility of the Board of County Commissioners that received a "new" fire code violation between January 1, 2016, and June 30, 2016, and "historical" violations prior to January 1, 2016, that remained open on June 30, 2016. The Audit team evaluated these fire code violations for timely remediation, adequate communication, re-inspection and remediation, and fines and fees.

Test 1-Timely Remediation

The Audit Team identified: the department responsible for each violation; how many violations were reported; the average number of days to clear a violation; and how many violations remained open as of June 30, 2016.

Test Results: The organization was issued 54 violations between January 1, 2016, and June 30, 2016. Forty-three, or 80%, of these were cleared by the Fire Marshal's Office in an average of 48 days per violation. Forty-eight days is a reasonable amount of time to remediate and re-inspect violations.

Thirty-one violations were open as of June 30, 2016.

County Department	"New" Fire Code Violations (Issued Between January 1, 2016, and June 30, 2016)			11 "New" Plus 20 "Historical" Violations	
	Total Fire Code Violations By Department	Violations Mitigated By Management and Cleared By the Fire Marshal's Office	Average Number of Days to Clear a Violation	Open Violations as of 6/30/16	Average Number of Days Open
Children's Services	4	2	30	2	22
Fire Rescue	3	3	3	20	¹ 1,804
Head Start	2	2	7	0	Na
Library Services	13	11	56	2	125
Parks & Recreation	29	22	58	7	111
Public Utilities	1	1	2	0	Na
Public Works	2	2	31	0	Na
Total/Average	54	43	48	31	1,198

¹ See page eight Exhibit 1 for an explanation for the lag time for the 20 Fire Rescue open fire code violations as of 6/30/16.

Test 2-Adequate Communication

For the full population of 31 violations that were open on June 30, 2016, the Audit Team performed testing to validate that the responsible department was notified of the violation and signed the report acknowledging receipt of the violation.

Test Results: Thirteen of the 31 reports were signed by the responsible department acknowledging receipt of the violation. The 18 reports that were not signed were Fire Rescue Department violations issued prior to April 27, 2015, which was when the Fire Rescue Department had a change in upper management.

Test 3-Re-inspection and Remediation

For the population of 31 violations that were open on June 30, 2016, the Audit Team performed testing to validate if the Fire Marshal's Office performed re-inspections between when the violation was issued and when the audit period ended on June 30, 2016. The re-inspection process conducted by the Fire Marshal's Office is to enforce Fire Rescue Ordinance 87-40, Section 16, Violations and Penalties, which states that:

"Any person who shall violate any of the provisions of the Code hereby adopted, or shall fail to comply therewith, or shall violate or fail to comply with any order made thereunder, or shall build in violation of any details, statements, specifications, or plans submitted or approved thereunder, or shall operate not in accordance with the provisions of any certificate, permit, or approval issued thereunder, and from which no appeal has been taken, or who shall fail to comply with such an order as affirmed or modified by the Fire Marshal or by a court of competent jurisdiction shall severally for each and every violation and noncompliance, respectively, be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500.00) or by imprisonment for not more than sixty (60) days or by both such fines and imprisonment. The imposition of a penalty for any violation shall not excuse the violation nor shall the violation be permitted to continue."

The inspector uses professional judgment based on the severity of the violation to determine the time given before a re-inspection is scheduled and performed. Per management, these re-inspections are normally performed within two weeks to six months.

Test Results: As shown in the table below, of the 31 fire code violations open on June 30, 2016:

- About one third (11) were re-inspected by the Fire Marshal's Office within the normal re-inspection time period of two weeks to six months.
- About half (14) were inspected during the Fire Marshal's periodic routine fire safety inspection process using the criteria and cycles denoted by risk priority in Policy #214, Occupancy Risk Assessment and Inspection Cycles, which requires each occupancy to be routinely inspected at least once every five years.
- The remaining six (6), at a Fire Rescue training facility, were neither re-inspected nor routine-inspected as of June 30, 2016.

County Department	Open Violations as of 6/30/16	Open Violations Occupancy Priority	Average Number of Days Open	Re-Inspected (2 weeks to 6 months)	Average Days to Perform First Re-Inspection
Children's Services	2	1	22	Yes	37
Fire Rescue	20	1,2 ²	1,804	No	1,769
Library Services	2	1	125	Yes	82
Parks & Recreation	7	1	111	Yes	33
Total/Average	31	----	1,198	----	943

All four of the departments with open fire code violations have an established process for tracking, reporting, and remediating violations. During 2015, the new Fire Rescue administration developed a plan of action to remediate fire code violations. A "Station Maintenance and Repair Ticket System" (SMARTS) was implemented to enter and track repairs needed at the fire stations. (See Fire Rescue remediation plan for violations that were open more than 365 days as of June 30, 2016, at Exhibit 1).

Test 4-Fines and Fees

The Audit Team performed testing to determine the fire code violation fines and fees paid by the Board of County Commissioners organization between January 1, 2016, and June 30, 2016.

Test Results: During the six month period ending June 30, 2016, the Fire Marshal's Office performed 58 re-inspections for fire code violations on properties owned and managed under the responsibility of the Board of County Commissioners. Of these, 55 were first re-inspections and 3 were second re-inspections. There were no third re-inspections, and no violations were referred to the Board of County Commissioners Code Enforcement Board. The re-inspection fees assessed to the Board of County Commissioners organization totaled \$562.50.

AUDIT COMMENT FOR TESTS 1-4

The control environment for the fire code violation communication and remediation function for properties under the Board of County Commissioners is at the informal control maturity level and does not consistently protect personnel and assets. Based upon tests results, the function operates in silos and lacks uniformity throughout the organization.

The Fire Marshal has enforcement responsibilities that were not imposed on Fire Rescue. By not remediating the fire code violations timely, Fire Rescue management prolonged the risk exposure to the Board of County Commissioners' personnel and assets. The Risk Management and Safety Department was unaware of this risk exposure and therefore did not consider it in the organization-wide risk assessment.

² The 20 open Fire Rescue Violations as of June 30, 2016, included 14 violations as Priority One fire stations, and six Priority Two violations at a Fire Rescue training facility.

RECOMMENDATION

Consideration should be given to the following operational changes as the new Fire Rescue GRAiT system is being implemented:

1. populating the new GRAiT system with all owned and managed properties under the responsibility of the Board of County Commissioners;
2. designating a central point of contact for each of these properties;
3. creating an automated email notification process in which all inspection results are communicated to the central points of contact; and
4. in those instances when a fire code violation is identified by the Fire Marshal's Office, and when a violation is not cleared during re-inspection, emailing a notification to the County Administrator and the appropriate level of executive management; and
5. escalating violations that are not remediated within a given time period to the Risk Management & Safety Department for consideration in the organization-wide risk assessment.

These operational changes will strengthen the control environment, allowing for an efficient and effective means for fire code violations to be communicated to department liaisons, the appropriate levels of management, and the centralized organization-wide point of contact when necessary. The Fire Marshal's responsibility is to inspect properties for compliance with the Florida Fire Prevention Code and report any fire safety violations. Each County department is responsible for ensuring the fire safety of the assets and personnel under their responsibility.

Exhibit 1: Management's remediation plan for fire code violations that were open more than 365 days as of June 30, 2016.

Fire Code Violation Location	Fire Code Violation	Date Identified	Days Open as of 6/30/16.	Management's Remediation Plan
HCFR - STATION 32 - EAST LAKE	18-18-Other violations/deficiencies:	04/23/2009	2,625	Property secured for new station construction. Open violations correction in progress.
HCFR - STATION 33 - FALKENBURG	05-05-Extinguishing equipment:	05/06/2009	2,612	Design for repairs in progress with R3M.
HCFR - STATION 33 - FALKENBURG	06-06-Class K extinguisher required:	05/06/2009	2,612	Design for repairs in progress with R3M.
HCFR - STATION 33 - FALKENBURG	04-04-Exhaust system required:	05/06/2009	2,612	Design for repairs in progress with R3M.
HCFR - STATION 29 - APOLLO BEACH	05-05-Extinguishing equipment:	09/08/2010	2,121	Building scheduled for complete renovation.
HCFR - STATION 29 - APOLLO BEACH	04-04-Exhaust system required:	09/08/2010	2,121	Building scheduled for complete renovation.
HCFR - STATION 23 - DOVER	05-05-Extinguishing equipment:	05/13/2010	2,239	Design for repairs in progress with R3M.
HCFR - STATION 23 - DOVER	101-4.6.13-Emergency lighting repair:	07/23/2013	1,073	Design for repairs in progress with R3M.
HCFR - STATION 23 - DOVER	A-Maintenance of Fire Hydrant(s):	07/23/2013	1,073	Design for repairs in progress with R3M.
HCFR - STATION 23 - DOVER	1-13.4.1-Level of protection:	01/06/2015	541	Design for repairs in progress with R3M.
HCFR - TRAINING	40.2.10-Marking of Means of Egress	05/04/2010	2,249	Building being vacated by HCFR in Dec. 2016. Building to be re-modeled by new tenant. Violations will no longer be applicable.
HCFR - TRAINING	40.2.9.1-Emergency Lighting	05/04/2010	2,249	Building being vacated by HCFR in Dec. 2016. Building to be re-modeled by new tenant. Violations will no longer be applicable.
HCFR - TRAINING	05-05-Extinguisher not provided:	05/04/2010	2,249	Building being vacated by HCFR in Dec. 2016. Building to be re-modeled by new tenant. Violations will no longer be applicable.
HCFR - TRAINING	GENERAL-General Code Violations	05/04/2010	2,249	Building being vacated by HCFR in Dec. 2016. Building to be re-modeled by new tenant. Violations will no longer be applicable.
HCFR - TRAINING	16-16-Guards and Handrails:	05/04/2010	2,249	Building being vacated by HCFR in Dec. 2016. Building to be re-modeled by new tenant. Violations will no longer be applicable.
HCFR - TRAINING	101-4.6.13-Emergency lighting repair:	08/05/2014	695	Building being vacated by HCFR in Dec. 2016. Building to be re-modeled by new tenant. Violations will no longer be applicable.
HCFR - STATION 22 - WIMAUMA	26.3.4.1.1-Detection, Alarm and Communic	05/31/2013	1,125	New station is under construction. Once the building is vacated the violations will no longer be applicable.
HCFR - STATION 22 - WIMAUMA	1-50.2.1-Exhaust system required:	05/31/2013	1,125	New station is under construction. Once the building is vacated the violations will no longer be applicable.
HCFR - STATION 24 - LUTZ	1-13.1.7-Maintenance of Fire Sprinkler S	05/30/2013	1,126	Fire sprinkler addition currently in progress.
HCFR - STATION 24 - LUTZ	A-Fire Sprinkler service/tag:	05/30/2013	1,126	Fire sprinkler addition currently in progress.

Management Response

Management concurs with the County Internal Auditor's overall opinion that the current system used to remediate fire code violations is fragmented and unwieldy. However, the fire code inspection function performed by the County's Fire Marshal is well-defined, and management believes that process identifies violations accurately; re-inspects when notified; and keeps an up-to-date log of inspections, violations, and remediation dates. It also appears that most departments follow-up on and correct fire code violations within a reasonable time when such violations involve simple replacement of burned-out exit light bulbs or other relatively routine maintenance items.

The exception to violations being corrected within a reasonable timeframe is concentrated in seven Fire/Rescue stations or facilities. Several of these structures are older and lacked exhaust, sprinkler, and/or alarm systems that are standard in stations being built today. The Fire Administration in place at the time many of these violations were identified (2009, 2010, and 2013) believed that replacing or renovating stations was a better use of taxpayer funds than trying to improve older buildings with an obsolete design. However, the timing then was not ideal for major capital projects to be initiated, as those years were during the height of the recession. Several capital projects were deferred during those years in order for the County to be fiscally responsible with fewer tax revenues.

Currently all older stations that were identified as having outstanding violations are either scheduled to be replaced and/or renovated soon or they are already under construction. When the new stations are brought on-line the fire code violations inherent in the old buildings will no longer exist. Until such time, the current Fire Administration will ensure that all existing and future health and safety fire code violations are addressed as quickly as possible.

In addition, Management has identified three overarching enhancements for the fire code violation/compliance process. First, an opportunity exists to improve how/when departments report remediated violations back to the Fire Marshal so that re-inspection occurs as soon as possible. The violation may then be cleared and the inspection log updated to reflect compliance. Second, standardized staff training to pro-actively identify and report problems with exit signs and exit doors in all County facilities would result in these problems being corrected sooner. Lastly, a more centralized and systemic approach to identifying, correcting, and reporting will establish clear responsibility and authority to ensure fire code violations are corrected quickly and seamlessly.

Specific staff actions and/or follow-up steps to implement the audit comments noted in Report #16-01 are outlined below.

TEST 1: TIMELY REMEDIATION

Staff Comment: Concur with Audit Test Results

Action Step: Establish Schedule for Expected Remediation Timeframes (implement by 12/31/2016)

According to the audit test, fire code violations issued within the test period were remediated within 48 days on average. Auditors indicated that this was a reasonable timeframe.

However, no formal, enterprise-wide schedule currently exists to define what constitutes acceptable remediation times. Management will establish a reasonable schedule for remediation following issuance of a fire code violation. The schedule will establish acceptable response times for easily-correctable violations (replacing an exit sign bulb, for example) and for other, more involved or difficult situations (such as a capital project to retrofit a building with sprinklers). Easily-correctable violations will be required to be remediated within 48 hours. Timelines for more extensive projects will depend upon the severity of the condition, the cost to correct the problem, alternative solutions, and budgetary capacity. In cases where a significant fire code violation occurs, Management commits to correcting the situation as quickly as possible; contracted resources will be deployed as necessary. The current Fire Administration and County Administrator both emphasize rapid remediation as a priority.

Once a draft schedule is developed, it will be reviewed with all departments that operate/occupy structures or facilities. Following feedback from those departments – and in consultation with the Fire Marshal – a remediation schedule will be distributed to each affected department. Quarterly and annual reviews of remediation timeliness will ensure compliance with the established schedule.

Action Step: Train Department Staff to Report Easily-Correctable Violations (implement by 12/31/2016)

Easily-correctable fire code violations should be reported and remediated as soon as possible after discovery. A list of potential violations that are easily-correctable will be developed and distributed to departments that operate/occupy structures or facilities. A reporting mechanism also will be set up and affected department staff will be trained in the process for notifying appropriate repair personnel to correct the problem; a log of the repairs will be kept for reference.

Action Step: Evaluate Viability of Single Referral Point for Remediation (evaluate by 12/31/2016)

The audit notes that “controls are fragmented and response to fire code violations are managed in silos.” A centralized approach to remediation activities/scheduling would help ensure consistent application of timelines and procedures to bring violations into compliance. Staff will define the steps necessary to implement a centralized remediation system and recommend an action plan to the County Administrator. A decision will be made then regarding this proposed action step.

TEST 2: ADEQUATE COMMUNICATION

Staff Comment: Concur with Audit Test Results

Action Step: Replace Current Tracking System Software (implement completed by 12/1/2016)

The Fire Marshal’s Office uses Resource Management Software (RMS) to track fire code inspections. That software is outdated. RMS is scheduled to be replaced with newer, more robust software (GRAIT) by December 1, 2016. GRAIT software automatically coordinates timing of initial inspections, re-inspections, and compliance dates. The software sends e-mail notifications to all

entities involved in maintaining County facilities (Risk Management, Real Estate & Facilities, and any affected department Managers/Directors/Executive Team members). An overview of the tracking path is attached ("Fire Code Violation Inspection Process").

TEST 3: RE-INSPECTION & REMEDIATION

Staff Comment: Concur with Audit Test Results

Action Step: Establish Protocol for Timely Notice of Corrective Remediation (implement by 12/31/2016)

The audit indicates 54 total fire code violations identified during the audit test period. Of these 54 violations, 20 violations were concentrated in Fire/Rescue. The vast majority of these Fire/Rescue violations are tied to pending/planned building renovations or replacements. As discussed above, the previous Fire Administration decided to address violations issued for older buildings via a capital program to renovate or replace those stations. Unfortunately, the violations were issued as the County faced significant fiscal constraints due to a deep recession and the lingering effect on tax revenue. Revenue has since rebounded sufficiently to enable the current Fire Administration to pursue the capital projects necessary to schedule renovations or replacement of stations that had costly price tags to remediate significant fire code violations. Currently, all open violations related to fire stations are in design and/or review. R3M funding will be immediately deployed once the design is approved, permits issued, and contracts awarded. The station violations will be closed out once inspected.

During the audit test period there were 31 new violations. Of these new violations, 20 were corrected during the audit test period. However, the audit noted that 11 new violations were not indicated to be corrected by the end of the audit test period. Management believes this test result is due to a gap in reporting after remediation occurs.

According to maintenance staff, many of the 31 new violations were corrected reasonably soon after receiving the violation notice from the Fire Marshal's Office. Assuming the remediation was in fact done shortly after the violation notice was received, a timely call for re-inspection would have resulted in a compliance note within a much shorter average time frame. The Fire Marshal indicates that fire inspector would have visited soon after a re-inspection request was made. However, no records were produced to show when departments made re-inspection requests.

Therefore, a defined process will be developed and implemented to call for re-inspections within 24 hours after a violation is corrected. A log will be kept to verify when re-inspection calls are made, and when the fire inspector deems the violation to be in compliance. This re-inspection process should be able to be managed easily via the GRAiT system (expected to be fully implemented by the Fire Marshal's Office on or before December 1, 2016).

TEST 4: FINES & FEES

Staff Comment: Concur with Audit Test Results

Action Step: None Planned

Implementing the steps outlined above for Tests 1-3 will reduce re-inspection fees. Those fees identified in the audit – though a minor amount – can be eliminated via timely and accurate compliance.

FINAL COMMENTS

Management has focused on addressing fire code compliance since November 2015. Software has been purchased to track initial inspections, remediation timeframes, re-inspections, and communications. Training modules are being developed to guide staff actions when departments that operate/occupy County facilities receive a fire code violation notice. Finally, Management will implement a centralized, systemic, and accountable protocol for correcting fire code violations. Additional contracted resources will be deployed as necessary to correct violations if necessary.

The current Fire Administration and County Administrator are strongly committed to significantly reducing the time necessary to bring violations into compliance. Staff will submit a follow-up report in June 2017 to detail progress on each action step outlined above.