

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS NOTICE

12-24

4/1/24

TASK DISTRIBUTOR UPDATES IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEM

NOTE: DO NOT IMPLEMENT THIS NOTICE UNTIL APRIL 10, 2024

I. PURPOSE

This notice provides instructions for how inspection program personnel (IPP) are to manage inspection tasks in the Public Health Information System (PHIS) once the Task Distributor (TD) updates are implemented, including that task assignments will be based on establishment profiles and operating schedules. This notice also includes additional information about these changes for IPP awareness.

II. BACKGROUND

PHIS was initially implemented in 2011 and was designed to ensure enough routine inspection verification tasks were available in most instances. FSIS modernized the PHIS Establishment Profile in 2022 and is now implementing an updated task distribution tool. This tool, the TD, allows more flexibility in assigning inspection tasks based on shift specific profile details and is designed to be more responsive to updates throughout the task assigned performance period, typically within the calendar month. Each night, the TD will adjust the number of planned routine tasks in response to changes in the Establishment Profile or changes in the shift Operating Schedule. The updated TD checks each Establishment Profile against the criteria in the Task Library to determine which shifts are eligible for which tasks. These tasks show as eligible on the Tasks page of the profile.

III. IPP RESPONSIBILITIES

A. IPP are to review the Tasks page of the Establishment Profile during the next routine Update Establishment Profile task to verify that all tasks expected for the establishment are available. If the tasks do not appear to be correct, IPP are to review the information in the Establishment Profile for accuracy (e.g., Products, HACCP Volumes, Operating Schedules, Inspection Tasks (Activities)) and edit the information as necessary. The updated Tasks page includes information about why a task is eligible or ineligible to assist IPP in identifying the applicable Establishment Profile fields when updates are necessary. IPP are to manually exclude tasks that don't apply to a shift if the Establishment Profile information is accurate but a task still appears on the Establishment Profile page as eligible. IPP are to discuss concerns about the tasks with their supervisor.

B. IPP are to use the PHIS tutorials and user guides that are maintained in [PHIS Help](#) or provided through supervisory instruction as well as [FSIS Directive 5300.1](#), *Managing the Establishment Profile in the Public Health Information System*, for additional information on maintaining the Establishment Profile. IPP are to refer to [FSIS Directive 13.000.1](#), *Scheduling In-Plant Inspection Tasks in PHIS*, for additional information about managing inspection tasks in PHIS.

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic

NOTICE EXPIRES: 4/1/25

OPI: OPPD

C. IPP are to be aware that the following data elements are commonly used by the TD to assign the number of routine inspection tasks:

1. **Inspection Activities** appear on the Profile Summary page and are determined by selections in the establishment Grants. The TD considers only the Inspection Tasks (Activities) for active Grants (Conditional or Granted).
2. **Voluntary Services** appear on the establishment's Voluntary tab of the Establishment Profile Grants page if applicable.
3. **HACCP Volumes** appear on the HACCP Volumes tab of the Products page of the profile. The TD will assign applicable routine tasks based on a non-zero volume range selection for a HACCP Processing Category.
4. **Products** appear on the Products page of the profile. The TD assigns applicable routine tasks based on specific product types. The TD considers only active products with non-zero volume and non-zero days of production when assigning these tasks. IPP are to identify products that are temporarily not produced (e.g., seasonal, construction) as inactive rather than deleting these entries. IPP are to delete products if the establishment notifies IPP that the products will no longer be produced.
5. **Included Inspection Tasks** appear on the Tasks page of the profile. The TD will generally only assign tasks that are checked as included on the Tasks page. Occasionally the TD will assign tasks that are unchecked (excluded) with 0 routine instances.

D. IPP are also to be aware that the TD uses the following data elements to calculate the number assigned for routine tasks:

1. **Shift Approved Hours of Inspection** appear on the Schedule page of the profile. The TD assigns tasks only to active shifts. For certain tasks, the TD calculates the number of routine tasks assigned based on expected operating days for the shift during the month.
2. **Dark Days** are displayed on the Schedule tab of the profile and appear as inactive days on the Task Calendar. The TD reduces the number of routine tasks assigned if IPP add additional dark days.

NOTE: The TD does not increase the number of routine tasks when IPP add overtime days because IPP are expected to use directed tasks when establishments work beyond their approved operating hours or days.

3. **No-Kill Periods** can be managed in the Animal Disposition module of PHIS. The TD reduces the number of routine tasks assigned for applicable slaughter related tasks when IPP add no-kill days.
4. **Number of Evisceration Lines Operating Simultaneously** appears on the Slaughter page of the profile. The TD will increase the number of routine tasks assigned for certain inspection tasks in establishments with more than one evisceration line operating at a time.
5. **Product Average Days of Production** appears on the Products page of the profile. For certain inspection tasks, the TD may decrease the number of routine tasks assigned if all the applicable products in the establishment profile have low average monthly days of production.

E. IPP are to be aware that PHIS has been updated in these ways:

1. The TD will distribute the initial assignment of routine tasks for the following month on the 20th of the current month.
2. The TD will now distribute tasks at the shift level. IPP are to be aware that Shift 1 and Shift 2 for the same establishment may have a different number assigned for the same task based on the information in the establishment profile for each shift.
3. The TD will distribute certain tasks with number planned=0 even after IPP identify these tasks in the Establishment Profile Tasks page as excluded. This will give IPP the opportunity to schedule directed tasks when needed. If IPP find that they are regularly adding directed tasks for tasks with 0 routine tasks, they are to review the Tasks page to ensure all applicable tasks are checked as included. Profile updates may be necessary for the TD to assign routine tasks. IPP in establishments that operate under the New Swine Slaughter Inspection System (NSIS) are to exclude the NSIS Ante-Mortem Food Safety Verification task and the NSIS Post-Mortem Food Safety Verification task after at least one routine task has been assigned to a shift. IPP are only to perform the NSIS Ante-Mortem Food Safety Verification Task and the NSIS Post-Mortem Food Safety Verification task as needed by the FSIS veterinarian to document a noncompliance as instructed in [FSIS Directive 6600.1](#), *New Swine Slaughter Inspection System: Ante-Mortem and Post-Mortem Inspection and Verification of Food Safety and Ready-to-Cook Requirements*. Routine instances of these tasks are not applicable.
4. The TD has been updated to evaluate task eligibility during the task assigned performance period after the initial assignment is complete. The TD updates the number of routine tasks assigned on the Task Calendar Task List every night in response to profile updates. IPP are to be aware that the number of assigned routine tasks may go up or down within a task performance period in response to profile or schedule changes. PHIS will not lower the number of assigned routine tasks for the month below the number of tasks already completed or in-progress.
5. The TD may reduce the number of assigned routine tasks below the number scheduled because of changes to the profile or operating schedule. Tasks already scheduled on the Task Calendar, before a TD update that reduces the number of assigned routine tasks, will still be on the calendar until they are removed by IPP. Those scheduled tasks are not represented in the updated number of assigned routine tasks in the Task List; rather they are now excess routine tasks. When IPP go to document an excess instance of that task from the Task Calendar, PHIS displays a pop-up message instructing them to remove the task from the Task Calendar and then opens the Inspection Results page.
6. IPP are to close the Inspection Results page and remove the excess routine task from the Task Calendar. IPP are to schedule and document a directed task when the task identified by the TD as excess has already been performed.
7. The same pop-up message described in number 5 (above) will appear when an excess instance of a routine task is opened from the Inspection Verification menu. IPP are to follow the instructions in number 6 (above) if IPP go to document an excess instance of a routine planned task from the Inspection Verification menu.

IV. QUESTIONS

Refer questions regarding this notice to your supervisor or as needed to the Office of Policy and Program Development through [askFSIS](#) or by telephone at 1-800-233-3935. When submitting a question, complete the [web form](#) and select General Inspection Policy for the inquiry type.

NOTE: Refer to [FSIS Directive 5620.1](#), Using askFSIS, for additional information on submitting questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel A. Edelstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development