

NATIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

WHEN SECONDS SAVE LIVES: TRANSFORMING WORKPLACE READINESS THROUGH 5S

"IMPROVING EMERGENCY RESPONSE
READINESS THROUGH WORKPLACE
ORGANIZATION ."

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We also acknowledge the valuable contributions of Station Officers, firefighters, support staff, and all employees who actively participated in the implementation and sustainability of the 5S initiatives. Your cooperation, ownership, and commitment to maintaining organized, safe, and efficient workplaces have demonstrated that quality improvement is truly a shared responsibility.

Finally, we thank every NFA employee who embraced the spirit of continuous improvement and contributed towards building a cleaner, safer, and more productive work environment. This project reflects what can be achieved when people work together with a common purpose and a shared vision of excellence.

Executive Summary

The National Fire Authority's Sustainable 5S Quality Circle Project was initiated to strengthen workplace organization, improve operational efficiency, promote environmental sustainability, and cultivate a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organization.

Recognizing the need for a more structured and sustainable approach to workplace management, the Quality Circle team adopted the internationally recognized 5S methodology: Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain. Through a collaborative and data-driven approach, the team assessed existing workplace challenges, identified improvement opportunities, and implemented practical solutions aimed at enhancing efficiency, safety, and accountability.

The project focused on eliminating unnecessary clutter, improving storage and resource management, standardizing workplace practices, and encouraging employee ownership of workspaces. Staff engagement played a critical role throughout the journey, ensuring that improvements were not only implemented but also sustained over time.

As a result, the project successfully transformed work environments into cleaner, safer, and better-organized spaces, leading to improved productivity, reduced waste, enhanced operational readiness, and greater employee satisfaction. The initiative also strengthened environmental stewardship by promoting responsible resource utilization and reducing unnecessary consumption.

Beyond the physical improvements, the project fostered a culture where continuous improvement became part of daily operations. Employees were empowered to identify problems, develop solutions, and contribute actively to organizational excellence.

The Sustainable 5S Quality Circle Project demonstrates NFA's commitment to quality, innovation, and business excellence. It serves as a model for how collaborative problem-solving and employee engagement can deliver meaningful and sustainable improvements that support NFA's mission of protecting lives, property, and the environment while providing exceptional service to the people of Fiji.

1. Introduction

1.1 Organisational Profile

The National Fire Authority (NFA) is Fiji's statutory organization responsible for delivering fire suppression, emergency rescue services, fire safety enforcement, public education, and community risk reduction programs across the country.

As an organization entrusted with protecting lives, property, and the environment, NFA is committed to continually improving the quality of its services. Through a strong focus on operational excellence, workplace safety, environmental responsibility, and customer satisfaction, NFA actively embraces continuous improvement initiatives that enhance organizational performance and service delivery.

1.2 Background of the Project

During routine inspection visits conducted by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to fire stations and office facilities nationwide, several opportunities for improvement were identified. These included issues relating to workplace organization, storage management, housekeeping practices, document control, equipment arrangement, and visual workplace standards.

Although 5S principles had previously been introduced within the organization, inspection findings revealed inconsistencies in implementation and sustainability across various stations and offices. While some locations demonstrated exemplary workplace practices, others faced challenges in maintaining the same level of organization and discipline.

Recognizing the need for a more structured and sustainable approach, the Quality Circle Team initiated this project to strengthen ownership, accountability, and standardization of 5S practices throughout NFA facilities.

1.3 Objectives of the Project

The project was undertaken with the following objectives:

- Strengthen and sustain 5S implementation across all NFA facilities.
- Address workplace improvement opportunities identified during CEO inspections.
- Improve workplace organization, cleanliness, and housekeeping standards.
- Enhance the accessibility, visibility, and accountability of equipment and resources.
- Foster greater employee involvement and ownership of workplace excellence initiatives.
- Establish consistent visual management systems throughout the organization.
- Improve operational efficiency and emergency response readiness.
- Support NFA's commitment to quality management, business excellence, and continuous improvement.

1.4 Scope of the Project

The project covered a wide range of operational and administrative areas, including:

- Fire stations
- Administrative offices
- Equipment and storage facilities
- Training centres
- Operational workspaces
- Shared common areas

The initiative focused primarily on workplace organization, process improvements, employee behavioural change, and sustainable practices. Major infrastructure upgrades and capital-intensive renovations were beyond the project's scope

2. Project Methodology

2.1 Project Approach and Phases

To ensure a systematic implementation process, the project adopted the **Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA)** methodology together with the principles of **5S**.

Phase 1: Team Formation

A cross-functional Quality Circle Team was established, comprising personnel selected based on their operational knowledge, commitment to quality improvement, representation of key functional areas, and ability to influence workplace practices.

Phase 2: Problem Identification

The team gathered information through:

- CEO inspection reports
- Workplace observations
- Employee consultations
- 5S audit findings
- Photographic assessments

These activities provided valuable insight into the current state of workplace organization and highlighted areas requiring improvement.

Phase 3: Root Cause Analysis

To gain a deeper understanding of the issues, the team utilized various quality improvement tools including:

- Brainstorming sessions
- Fishbone (Cause-and-Effect) Diagrams
- Why-Why Analysis
- Pareto Analysis

These tools enabled the team to identify the underlying causes contributing to inconsistent 5S implementation.

Phase 4: Development of Solutions

Potential solutions were generated and evaluated using:

- Affinity Diagrams
- Impact-Effort Matrix
- Benchmarking against best practices

This ensured that selected solutions were practical, sustainable, and aligned with organizational objectives.

Phase 5: Implementation

The improvement initiatives included:

- Workplace sorting and decluttering exercises
- Removal of obsolete and unnecessary items
- Installation of labelling systems
- Introduction of visual controls
- Standardization of workstation layouts
- Workplace clean-up campaigns

Phase 6: Monitoring and Sustainability

To ensure long-term success, progress was monitored through:

- Regular 5S audits
- CEO inspection programs
- Station assessments
- Monthly monitoring reports.

2.2 Project Milestones

To ensure the successful completion of the project, the team will follow a structured implementation schedule from November 2025 to August 2026. The project will commence in March 2026 with the formation of the Quality Circle team and the identification of the problem that requires improvement. During this phase, team members will be assigned roles and responsibilities, and the scope of the project will be clearly defined.

From March to April 2026, the team will undertake comprehensive data collection activities and conduct root cause analysis using quality improvement tools such as brainstorming, Pareto analysis, fishbone diagrams, and the 5 Whys technique. This stage is critical in understanding the underlying causes of the identified problem and establishing a data-driven basis for improvement.

In May 2026, the team will develop practical and innovative solutions to address the root causes identified. Proposed improvement measures will be evaluated for feasibility, effectiveness, and cost implications before obtaining the necessary approvals from management and relevant stakeholders.

Implementation of the approved solutions will take place in June 2026. During this period, the team will introduce the improvement initiatives, communicate changes to relevant personnel, and ensure that adequate resources and support mechanisms are in place to facilitate successful execution.

In July 2026, the team will monitor the effectiveness of the implemented solutions by collecting performance data, measuring results against established targets, and evaluating whether the desired improvements have been achieved. Any necessary corrective actions will be identified and implemented during this phase.

Finally, in August 2026, the project will focus on standardization and sustainability. Successful practices will be documented through standard operating procedures, work instructions, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the improvements are sustained over the long term. Lessons learned will also be shared to promote continuous improvement across the organization.

3. Project Analysis

3.1 Problem Identification

The project originated from observations made during CEO inspections, workplace audits, staff feedback sessions, and operational reviews. These assessments revealed inconsistent implementation of 5S practices across NFA facilities.

Common findings included:

- Accumulation of unnecessary materials and equipment
- Inconsistent labelling systems
- Limited use of visual management tools
- Irregular housekeeping activities
- Non-standardized workstation arrangements
- Inadequate monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
- These issues affected workplace efficiency, resource accessibility, and overall organizational appearance.

3.2 Target Setting

To measure success, the team established the following targets:

- Achieve and maintain a minimum 90% compliance rate in 5S audits.
- Ensure all designated work areas are properly labelled and standardized.
- Reduce unnecessary stored items by at least 50%.
- Achieve full staff participation in workplace improvement initiatives.

Improve performance ratings during CEO inspections

3.3 Cause Identification

Information gathered through inspections, audits, staff interviews, observations, and photographic evidence identified several key root causes:

- Lack of consistent ownership of workplace improvement activities.
- Absence of standardized procedures and expectations.
- Limited employee awareness of 5S requirements.
- Inconsistent monitoring and follow-up activities.
- Insufficient visual workplace controls.
- Competing operational priorities that reduced focus on housekeeping and organization.

Solution Development

3.4 Possible Solutions

Several possible improvement opportunities were explored, including:

1. Conducting regular workplace clean-up campaigns.
2. Introducing workplace labelling and visual management systems.
3. Developing station-specific 5S standards.
4. Implementing regular audit programs.
5. Establishing recognition and accountability mechanisms.
6. Integrating 5S requirements into CEO inspection criteria.

3.5 Solutions Evaluation

Each solution was assessed against the following criteria:

- Cost effectiveness
- Ease of implementation
- Sustainability
- Operational impact
- Employee acceptance
- Alignment with NFA strategic objectives

3.6 Solution(s) Selection

Following evaluation, the team agreed to implement:

- A standardized 5S audit system
- Workplace labelling and visual management tools
- Routine inspections and compliance monitoring
- Staff awareness and training programs
- Clear workplace ownership responsibilities
- Employee recognition and continuous improvement initiatives
- These solutions offered significant organizational benefits while requiring minimal financial investment.

4. Project Implementation

4.1 Implementation Plan

The project was implemented through:

- Workplace assessments and inspections
- Removal of obsolete, damaged, and unused items
- Reorganization of storage and operational areas
- Installation of labels, signs, and visual guides
- Assignment of area ownership responsibilities
- Staff awareness and engagement sessions
- Introduction of scheduled audits
- Ongoing compliance monitoring

4.2 Monitoring and Control

Progress was tracked through:

- Monthly/Weekly 5S audits
- CEO inspection reviews
- Station self-assessments
- Corrective action monitoring
- Progress reporting
- Before-and-after photographic comparisons

4.3 Challenges Faced

Several challenges were experienced during implementation, including:

- Resistance to change among some personnel
- Time constraints due to operational demands
- Variations in station layouts and workspace design
- Sustaining momentum following initial improvements

These challenges were successfully managed through strong leadership support, regular communication, staff engagement activities, recognition programs, and ongoing follow-up inspections.

5. Project Implementation Results

5.1 Tangible Results

The project delivered measurable improvements, including:

- Better organized workplaces
- Reduced clutter and excess storage
- Improved visibility and accessibility of equipment
- Enhanced housekeeping standards
- Improved 5S audit performance
- Higher CEO inspection ratings
- More efficient resource utilization
- Improved accountability for organizational assets

5.2 Intangible Results

The project also generated significant cultural and organizational benefits, such as:

- Increased employee ownership and accountability
- Improved morale and teamwork
- Strengthened workplace safety culture
- Greater awareness of continuous improvement principles
- Enhanced professional image of NFA facilities
- Improved organizational discipline
- Increased readiness for emergency response operations

5.3 Sustainability Plan

To ensure continued success, NFA will:

- Incorporate 5S performance into annual station assessments.
- Continue monthly workplace audits.
- Include 5S compliance within CEO inspection programs.
- Conduct regular refresher training and awareness sessions.
- Maintain clear workplace ownership responsibilities.
- Recognize high-performing stations and teams.
- Integrate 5S practices into standard operating procedures.

- Review and update workplace standards annually.

By embedding these practices into everyday operations, NFA aims to ensure that 5S becomes a way of working rather than a one-time initiative, supporting long-term operational excellence, workplace safety, environmental stewardship, and continuous improvement.

6. Lessons Learned

6.1 Key Takeaways

This project demonstrated that successful and sustainable workplace improvement depends on:

- Strong leadership commitment and support.
- Consistent inspections and monitoring.
- Active employee engagement and participation.
- Effective visual management systems.
- Ongoing performance review and accountability.
- Continuous improvement through small but meaningful changes.
- Recognition that workplace excellence directly contributes to operational readiness and service delivery.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the project's success, the Quality Circle Team recommends:

1. Rolling out the standardized 5S framework across all NFA facilities.
2. Digitizing 5S audit and inspection reporting processes.
3. Establishing annual inter-station 5S competitions.
4. Integrating 5S performance indicators into employee appraisal systems.
5. Maintaining CEO inspection programs as a key sustainability measure.
6. Encouraging the sharing of best practices between stations.
7. Aligning future Quality Circle initiatives with NFA's Business Excellence, Sustainability, and Continuous Improvement objectives.

Through continued leadership commitment, employee participation, and a culture of continuous improvement, NFA will further strengthen workplace excellence and reinforce its reputation as a high-performing emergency services organization dedicated to quality, safety, sustainability, and community service.

7. Conclusion

The National Fire Authority's Sustainable 5S Journey has been a transformative initiative that has strengthened workplace organization, operational efficiency, safety, and continuous improvement across the organization. Through the consistent application of the 5S principles of Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, and Sustain, NFA has fostered a culture of discipline, accountability, and excellence within its stations, departments, and operational environments.

This journey has not only enhanced the appearance and functionality of workplaces but has also contributed to improved service delivery, resource utilization, staff productivity, and occupational health and safety. By integrating sustainability principles into daily operations, NFA has demonstrated its commitment to environmental responsibility, waste reduction, and the efficient use of resources while maintaining operational readiness.

The success of the Sustainable 5S program is a testament to the dedication, teamwork, and leadership shown by employees at all levels. As NFA continues its pursuit of organizational excellence, the Sustainable 5S initiative will remain a foundational pillar supporting continuous improvement, innovation, quality management, and business excellence aspirations.

Moving forward, NFA remains committed to embedding 5S practices into its organizational culture, ensuring that the gains achieved are maintained and continually improved. Through ongoing engagement, monitoring, and leadership support, NFA will continue to strengthen its position as a resilient, efficient, and high-performing emergency service organization dedicated to serving the people of Fiji with professionalism and excellence.

8. Appendices

Annexure 1 Why to Why Analysis

Problem Statement:

Work areas within NFA were not consistently organized, resulting in inefficiencies, wasted time, resource loss, and challenges in sustaining workplace standards.

Why?	Answer
Why 1	Workstations and storage areas were cluttered and not consistently maintained.
Why 2	There was no standardized system for organizing tools, equipment, documents, and resources.
Why 3	Employees followed different methods of storing and managing workplace items.
Why 4	Awareness and understanding of workplace organization and 5S principles were limited.
Why 5	There was no structured and sustainable approach to workplace housekeeping, standardization, and continuous improvement.

Root Cause Identified : Lack of a structured, standardized, and sustainable workplace management system supported by employee engagement and continuous improvement practices.

Problem Statement: 5S improvements were difficult to sustain over time across stations and departments.

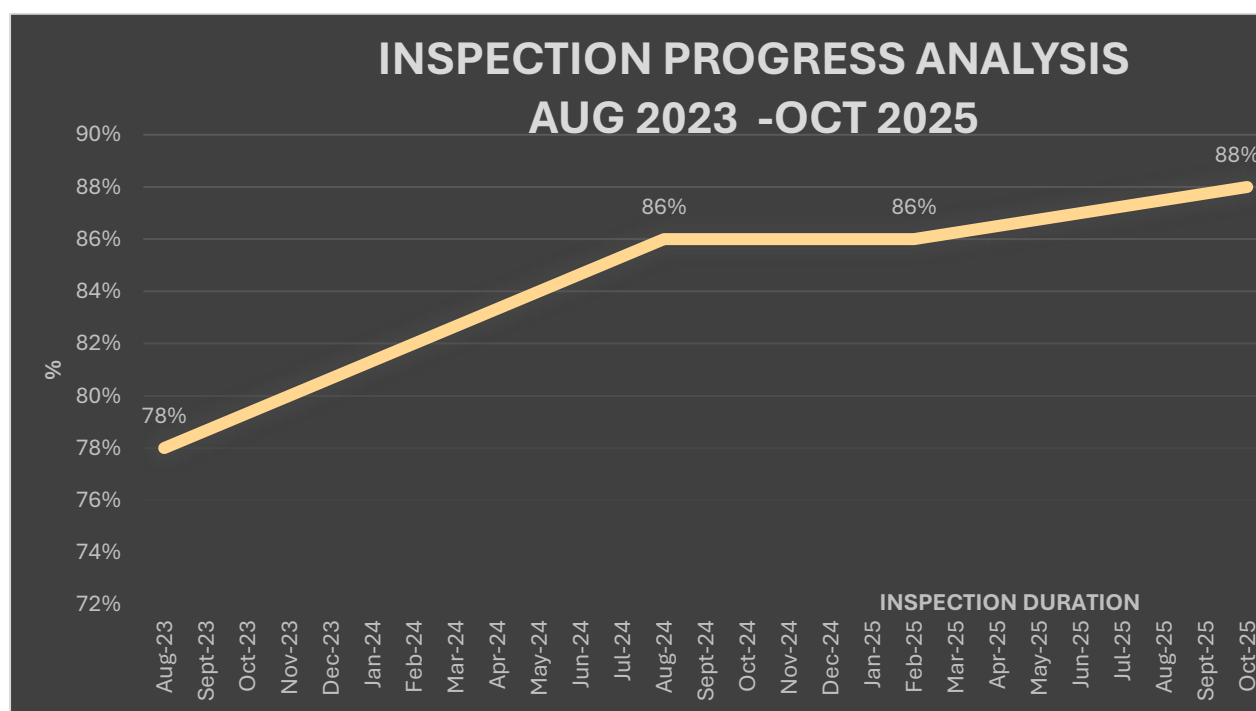
Why?	Answer
Why 1	Workplace conditions gradually returned to previous habits after initial improvements.
Why 2	Regular monitoring and follow-up activities were inconsistent.
Why 3	Employees were focused on operational priorities and gave less attention to maintaining standards.
Why 4	Workplace ownership and accountability mechanisms were not clearly defined.
Why 5	A culture of continuous improvement and sustainability was not fully embedded into daily operations.

Root Cause Identified: Insufficient integration of 5S practices into organizational culture, performance expectations, and routine workplace activities.

Annexure 2: Project Milestone

PDCA	Organization Name	National Fire Authority										
	Project Year	2025-2026										
	PROJECT TASK	Timelines (Month)										
		Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25 till Date	
PLAN	CEO Inspection & Challenges Analysis											
	Staff Training and Awareness on Quality Circles & 5s Management System (National Level)											
	Circle Formation, Further Problem Identification & Analysis											
	Project Selection											
	Data Selection											
	Target Setting											
DO	Implementation of action plan											
CHECK	Result Evalaution											
	Comparison											
ACT	Standardization											
REVIEW & SUSTAINABILITY												

Annexure 3: Line graph showing CEOs Inspections Progress 2023-2025

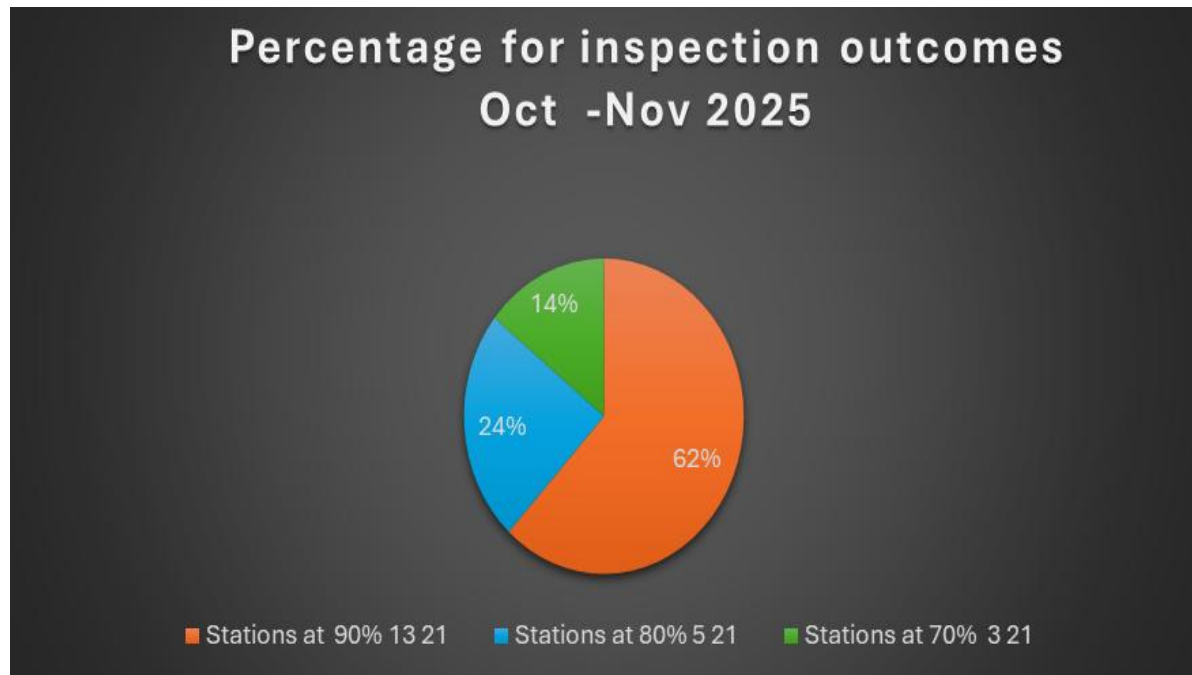


Since August 2023, there has been a notable increase in overall average scores, rising from 78% to 86% in August 2024 and maintaining this level in February 2025. In November 2025,

the percentage was observed with an increase in 2% from February 2025 recorded at 88%. This depiction is a significant 10% increase from its initiation.

The upward trend in inspection progress percentage indicates a marked improvement in operational efficiency and compliance monitoring

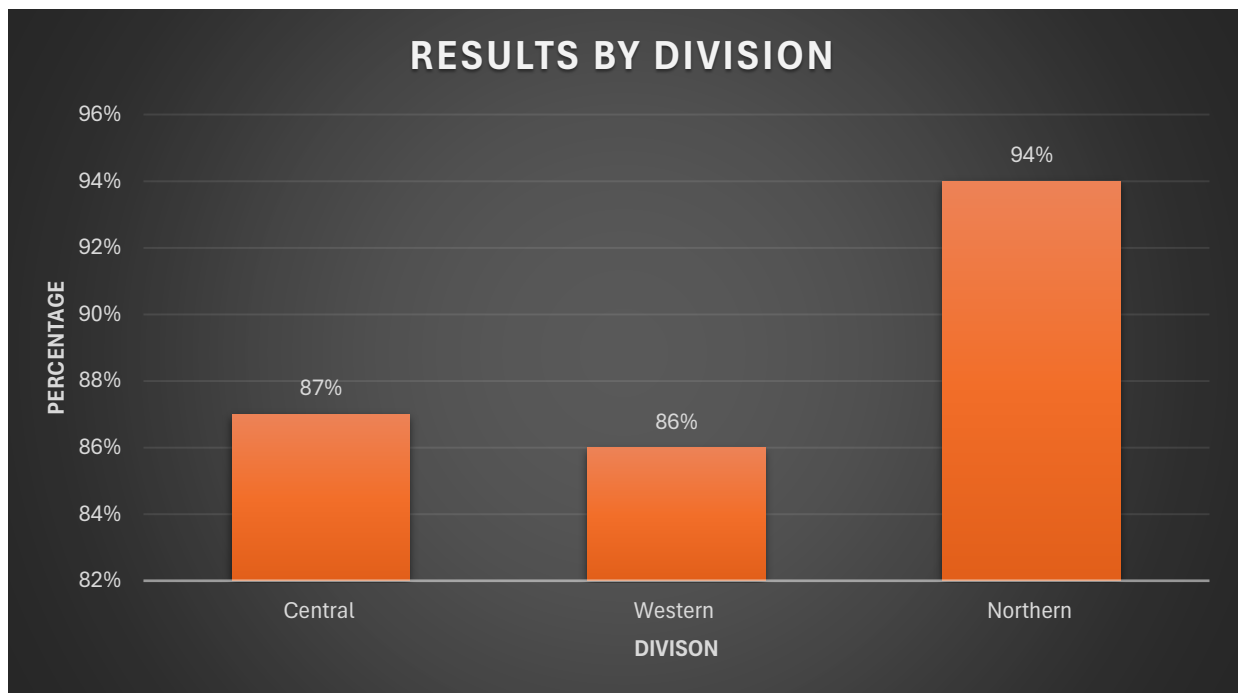
Annexure 4: Pie Chart showing percentage for inspection outcomes November 2025



This analysis was done as per stations' outcomes for achievement at $\geq 90\%$, $\geq 80\%$ and $\geq 70\%$ respectively. The threshold for inspection outcome is 90% . As per analysis carried out, a total of 13 stations scored $\geq 90\%$ rated at 62%. 5 stations of the 21 stations scored $\geq 80\%$, being tallied at 24% while only 3 stations rated at 14%.

A significant milestone has been achieved with an increasing number of stations consistently scoring 90%

Annexure 5: Divisional Results Obtained in July 2026 CEOs Inspection



The total inspection scores were categorized by division to evaluate and compare overall divisional performance. This assessment provides valuable insight into how effectively each division maintains operational standards, meets compliance requirements, and implements corrective actions and improvements. The results show that the Northern Division achieved the highest overall score at 94%, demonstrating outstanding performance and strong adherence to established standards. The Central Division followed with 87%, reflecting solid operational performance, while the West Division recorded 86%, indicating satisfactory compliance with opportunities for further improvement.

