

MDEQ Small and Medium Business Assistance Initiative

Small business owners face a multitude of rules, regulations, and requirements. Knowing all of them can be a daunting task. One missed requirement in a new business or expansion plan can be costly in terms of time and money.

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) recognizes that small and medium businesses need different types of assistance to effectively navigate the permit process. MDEQ is beginning an effort to improve its assistance activities to small and medium businesses. MDEQ plans to meet with various stakeholders during the coming months to identify both the needs and concerns of facilities that come to MDEQ for environmental permits.

One method of outreach MDEQ intends to use is the development of a series of articles to be published in various publications. The purpose of the articles will be to provide information and guidance on issues associated with environmental permitting. Initially, the articles will focus on areas the agency perceives as being troubling to the small and medium business community. The first articles will focus on explaining the permitting process and existing assistance resources. As the series progresses, we hope to be able to respond to issues and questions put to the agency by our stakeholders.

MDEQ's experience leads us to believe that one of the primary causes of facilities either receiving permit decisions much later than they desire or need them, or having significant difficulty in obtaining permits that are minimally burdensome to the applicant is that many applicants enter the permitting system too late. Many permitting and environmental issues may be avoided if potential decision shaping facts are identified before irrevocable commitments are made. Often these permitting issues are the result of trying to force a project into a less than ideal site.

Applicants should ideally contact MDEQ as soon as they begin to consider any activity that may require environmental permits. This will allow MDEQ to work with applicants to identify issues, early in the process, that may be a factor in site, equipment, or manufacturing process selection. A few key elements that need to be evaluated early in the process are: receiving classification, local approvals, and availability of water source.

MDEQ has a number of permitting programs that are located in the Offices of Pollution Control, Land and Water Resources, and Geology. Most of the environmental permitting programs at MDEQ are located in the Environmental Permit Division (EPD). EPD's web page is at http://www.deq.state.ms.us/MDEQ.nsf/page/epd_epdhome. EPD's web page includes links to application forms, branches within EPD, and frequently asked questions.
