



Permit Streamlining in Illinois

Overview

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has launched its new web portal for environmental permitting that will make the process more user-friendly and transparent and allow applicants and other interested parties to track the progress of the Agency's permit decision-making process on-line for the first time. The web portal, along with other permitting efficiencies, was developed as part of Public Act 97-95, which was signed by Gov. Pat Quinn in July 2011.

The final product was the result of numerous meetings and discussions between the Illinois EPA and representatives of the Illinois business community. The goal of the legislation is making compliance with environmental regulations less burdensome, without sacrificing protection of the state's air, land and water or public health. The various elements of Permit Streamlining will be phased in over the next two years, but the critical elements have been implemented.

The Web Portal

The Illinois EPA's new web portal can be found at www.epa.state.il.us. It is a critical first step in implementing this major environmental permit streamlining law. The new web portal consolidates and makes more accessible information needed by applicants including:

- Fact sheets, guidance documents and instructions on which types of facilities or activities require specific permits, including those for air pollution control, water discharges, wastewater and public drinking water, and management of hazardous waste.
- Permit application forms, many of which now can be saved and filled out electronically. Additional measures that will take effect in July 2013 include digital signatures, professional certification requirements and supporting documents being available for electronic submission.
- An online tracking system for all Agency permits that allows an applicant and other interested parties to review the status of a pending application. Many of the application forms can now or will soon be able to be edited, saved and submitted electronically with digital signatures.
- Status reports on implementation of other permit streamlining measures in the new law that have later milestones, including the development of general permits for certain specific types of activities, such as nonhazardous solid waste activities and discharge of stormwater from landfills, as well as permitting by rule for certain types of equipment.

Online Permitting Applications

The Illinois EPA is responsible for protecting and enhancing the quality of air, land and water resources. By requiring permits, we ensure that all federal and state environmental standards are being achieved. Permits are required by various programs among the Illinois EPA's three bureaus. The permitting process is a critical part of protecting and enhancing air quality, reducing contamination of the land through prevention and cleanup, and ensuring clean and safe water. Providing on-line permit applications is a convenience for the regulated community and helps to ensure that all federal and state environmental standards are being achieved.

In addition, the Agency is providing checklists and guidance documents for permit applications on its web portal, including instructions for completing permit applications and examples of completed permit applications.

The Agency is also developing application forms that can be completed and saved electronically, and submitted to the Agency electronically with digital signatures.

Online Permit Tracking System

To ensure transparency, and provide a mechanism for applicants and the public to monitor the status of his pending application, an online tracking system was developed. The tracking system allows an applicant to review the status, and includes the name and contact information of the permit analyst assigned to the application.

The tracking system contains information on air construction permits, new National Priority Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits and associated water construction permits, modifications of major NPDES permits and associated water, and construction permits.

General Permitting

The Agency is in the process of developing, in consultation with the regulated community, general permits. This will allow certain categories of facilities to be eligible for a General Permit, rather than a permit developed specifically for a site. Activities for a General Permit include as nonhazardous solid waste activities, discharge of stormwater from landfills and discharge of hydrostatic test waters.

Permitting by Rule

As part of the changes under the Permit Streamlining law, The Agency is also developing, in consultation with the regulated community the types of permits for which permitting by rule would be appropriate and consistent with state and federal law. Examples of the types of permits for which permitting by rule would be allowed include certain package boilers and heaters using only natural gas or refinery gas; and certain internal combustion engines.

Expedited Permitting

While no specific deadlines are contained under the expedited permit section of the bill, the Agency is also developing criteria for expedited permitting. This will allow applicants that have to meet critical deadlines in their development or construction projects, to request that the review of their permit be expedited, if they cover the additional costs incurred by the Agency.

Registration of Smaller Sources

Another significant part of the new law that has also recently been implemented is the Registration of Smaller Sources, known as the "ROSS" program. It will reduce the regulatory burden on smaller sources of air emissions by making them eligible for registration instead of having to obtain permits.

ROSS would apply to an estimated 3,250 of the 6,457 air emission sources now permitted across the state. It will also result in a substantial cost savings for those sources, with a \$235 annual registration fee instead of the current air permit fees of up to \$3,400 for this group. It would include smaller businesses and small facilities of larger companies.

ROSS will result in little or no impact on air quality because the larger sources that would still need a standard permit contribute more than 99 percent of the total air pollution, while eligible smaller sources emit less than one percent. ROSS will also allow Illinois EPA to focus on major sources of air emissions.