



Fact Sheet

Air Quality Permitting at DEQ

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality protects and restores Oregon's air quality. The quality of the air you breathe depends on where you live, what you do, and the conditions around you. Since air quality and pollution are complex and influenced by various factors, DEQ uses a variety of tools including regulation, permits, incentives and awareness building to reduce emissions and protect the quality of Oregon's air.

Why we have air quality permits

DEQ develops air quality permits for facilities so that they can operate while keeping the air safe to breathe. Permits contain specific emission limits and reporting requirements. Depending on the facility, permits may also contain pollution controls, equipment testing requirements and compliance schedules. Permits require ongoing rulemaking, policy and guidance development to incorporate new requirements and assist facilities in compliance.

Who needs an air quality permit

DEQ's air quality permitting program is tasked with reducing emissions from stationary and portable facilities in Oregon. Stationary sources are places with fixed emission points, like power plants, industrial facilities, or a small business like a dry cleaner or gas station. Portable facilities are facilities that move from location to location, like asphalt paving plants or rock crushing facilities. Portable facility regulations do not extend to mobile sources like vehicles, trains or marine vessels. Any business or industry that emits or has the potential to emit pollution into the air may be required to obtain an air permit from DEQ.

What air quality permits regulate

DEQ's air quality permits use models to establish emissions limits and monitoring requirements for six federally regulated air pollutants that can cause respiratory health risks and damage airways:

- **Particulate matter.** Dust, dirt, soot, smoke, and liquid droplets in the air
- **Lead.** A byproduct of ore and metal processing, utilities, and transportation
- **Carbon monoxide.** An odorless, invisible gas from incomplete combustion, mainly from motor vehicles and utilities
- **Nitrogen oxides.** A group of pollutants mainly from burning fuels, like in vehicle exhaust
- **Sulfur oxides.** A group of gases, mainly from burning fossil fuels, like in power plants
- **Ground-level smog.** Created when pollution from cars, power plants, and other industrial facilities react in the presence of sunlight. In permits, this shows up as a limit on volatile organic compound, or VOC, emissions

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DEQ also requires facilities to perform air quality modeling for emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, and particulate matter to ensure these emissions meet federal air quality standards.

Lastly, DEQ evaluates and regulates the emission of hazardous air pollutants. Hazardous air pollutants are known or suspected to cause cancer and other serious health effects, such as reproductive effects or birth defects, or adverse environmental effects. DEQ evaluates the number tons of emissions per year and can require facilities install pollution controls to lower the level of hazardous air pollutants a facility emits.

Cleaner Air Oregon

Oregon has a health-based air regulations known as the Cleaner Air Oregon Program. This program requires businesses applying for an air quality permit to demonstrate compliance with health-based standards prior to obtaining a permit. Compliance with a health-based standard rather than limits based on emission control technology is important because some chemicals can have a significant impact on health even in small amounts.

The program addresses the hazardous air pollutants mentioned above and greatly expands the number of chemicals DEQ regulates. Based on the facility's risk assessment, Cleaner Air Oregon may recommend additional permit conditions to protect public health. Cleaner Air Oregon has a prioritized, risk-based list it is using to call companies in to the program. Permit requirements for existing facilities can be added at any time through a permit addendum or modification.

How to get an air quality permit

DEQ issues permits for new facilities, existing facilities, and facilities that are undergoing a modification to industrial processes. To obtain a permit from DEQ, facilities must have an approved Land Use Compatibility Statement from the appropriate local zoning or planning authority. Before applying for an air quality permit, facilities must inventory and share information with DEQ about all equipment and processes with the potential to emit pollutants at the facility. This includes things like emergency engines, heaters, boilers, equipment that burns fuel and activities that create dust or evaporate volatile materials like solvents or paints.

Type of air quality permits

Generally, air permits follow this hierarchy from most complex to least complex: Title V, Standard Air Contaminant Discharge Permit, Simple ACDP, General ACDP, and Basic ACDP.

Title V permits are required by the Federal Clean Air Act for major sources of criteria or hazardous air pollutants. Title V permits apply to some of the highest emitting and most complex facilities in Oregon. There are about 105 100 facilities that require a Title V permit in Oregon as of January 2025.

Air Contaminant Discharge Permits apply to construction of new and modified stationary facilities of various sizes as well as operation of medium sized existing stationary facilities that are not required to obtain Title V permits. The ACDP program, which began in 1972, permits about 2,500 facilities in Oregon. ACDP permits cover facilities that range in size and scale from a local autobody shop to landfills and incinerators. Facilities that emit air pollution but are not required to obtain an ACDP because their emissions are below permitting thresholds are required to notify DEQ through a Notice of Construction.

Non-discrimination statement

DEQ does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status in the administration of its programs and activities. Visit DEQ's [Civil Rights and Environmental Justice page](#).