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## ENHANCED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

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## Abbreviations

- **Illinois EPA or the Agency** – Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
- **DAP** – Disability Access Plan
- **EJ** – Environmental Justice
- **FOS** – Field Operations Section (Air, Land, and/or Water)
- **LAP** – Language Access Plan
- **LEP** – Limited English Proficiency

- **OCR** – Office of Community Relations
- **OEJ** – Office of Environmental Justice
- **PPP or Plan** – Public Participation Plan
- **U.S. EPA** – United States Environmental Protection Agency

## Definitions

Definitions reflect commonly understood terms and are meant only to inform this document. Nothing is intended to change any definitions set forth in statute or regulations.

**Accessibility Needs** – additional needs of members of the public for effective public participation in Agency actions; these include accessibility needs related to physical, developmental, or intellectual disabilities; diverse cultures; limited English proficiency or non-English speaking, low-income, and/or transportation disadvantaged; and/or older adults.

**Agency Action** – a decision of the Agency, including a permitting decision, or proposed Agency rule or regulation.

**Community Outreach & Engagement** – communicating directly with impacted communities to inform and encourage public participation, to respond to community concerns, and to provide a means for their input to inform Agency decisions.

**Environmental Justice (EJ)** – the principle that all people should be protected from environmental pollution and have the right to a clean and healthy environment. EJ is the protection of the health of the people of Illinois and its environment, and equity in the administration of the Illinois EPA's activities and programs, including facilitating greater opportunities by the public for meaningful involvement and engagement in Agency decision-making with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies, including efforts to promote public participation.

**Limited English Proficient (LEP)** – individuals who do not use English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English are considered LEP.

**Meaningful involvement and engagement** – the opportunity for and access by the public to participate in Agency decisions; where decision-makers provide awareness of a proposed Agency decision and seek out and facilitate the public's involvement; where public concerns are considered in a decision-making process; and the process by which the public can help inform Agency decisions.

**Plain language** – verbal and written communication that is clear, concise, well-organized, effective, and accessible. The goal of communicating with the public in plain language is to present technical and scientific information in a way that is easier to understand for a wide audience and the public.

**Public comment** – a written or oral comment submitted to Illinois EPA during a public comment period, or a hearing, that provides feedback, input, or opinions on a proposed Agency action.

**Public comment period** – a designated time during which Illinois EPA invites the public to provide written comments (feedback, input, or opinions) on a proposed Agency action.

**Public hearing** – a formal session defined by statute or regulation conducted for the purpose of accepting oral and written comments on a proposed Agency action held following notice to interested persons. The structure of a public hearing varies depending on the subject matter, but typically is divided into segments beginning with opening statements and presentations from the hearing officer and/or other Illinois EPA staff, continuing with oral statements and presentations from the regulated entity and/or the public, and then ending with concluding remarks from the hearing officer. Depending upon the number of public participants, capacity of the public hearing venue, and the allotted time period for use of the venue, the time period for each oral statement/presentation may be limited. Relevant statutes and regulations may provide for additional time for the submittal of written comments following the public hearing. All comments received within the designated comment period are added to the administrative record.

**Public meeting** – a proceeding that is less formal than a public hearing, which may also be defined by statute or regulation, where information is shared with the public concerning a proposed Agency action. There is no prescribed structure or form, and the meeting can be held at any time during the public participation process, with a variety of formats.

**Public notice** – a formal type of publication that alerts the public to a proposed Agency action and instructs the public on when and how to participate and make comments to help inform Agency decisions.

**Agency notification** – information alerting the public of a proposed Agency action. This may include a public notice or a meeting notice, as well as broader form of communications (e.g., social media post or website publication).

**Public participation** – the means of informing and engaging the public in Agency actions and providing a consideration to public input in Agency decision-making. It is a process rather than a single event that consists of a series of activities and actions over the lifespan of a project or activity (e.g., permit decision, Agency rulemaking, etc.) to both inform and obtain input from the public. Public participation affords stakeholders the opportunity to help inform Agency decisions.

**Regulated entity** – any person, source, facility, owner, operator, or other responsible party under state or federal statutes or regulations administered by the Illinois EPA.

**Stakeholders** – parties who have an interest or desire some engagement with the Illinois EPA on an issue, such as community groups, individuals, regulated entities, units of state, federal, and local government, and/or interest groups.

## About Illinois EPA

Illinois EPA’s mission is to safeguard environmental quality, consistent with the social and economic needs of the State of Illinois and its enabling authorities, so as to protect health, welfare, property, and the quality of life. By partnering with the public, businesses, and local, state, and federal government agencies, the Illinois EPA is dedicated to continued protection of Illinois’ air, water, and land resources.

Fair treatment, meaningful involvement, and public engagement are key elements in achieving the Agency’s mission. This Public Participation Plan (Plan or PPP) outlines a framework the Agency is committed to implementing and is consistent with the Agency’s [Environmental Justice \(EJ\) Policy](#). This PPP describes the tools and outreach strategies that the Illinois EPA may use to increase engagement in Agency actions.

## Introduction

Illinois EPA is committed to collaborating with the public in an open and transparent manner. To that end, the Agency promotes the goals of public participation and is aware of the diversity of the Illinois population and unique needs of communities across the State when developing and implementing public participation, outreach, and engagement programs.

Illinois EPA recognizes that public participation practices evolve with changes in technology and access to media sources. This Plan is intended to be a living document that is flexible and open to updates and refinements. It is not binding on Illinois EPA staff, the public, or regulated entities and does not establish any legally enforceable rights or obligations beyond those provided by statute and regulation.

## Purpose

This Plan outlines efforts that may be tailored to various Agency actions to promote and enhance public participation in the Agency’s execution of its mission. This Plan reflects the Illinois EPA’s commitment to ensuring the Agency meets its nondiscrimination obligations under applicable civil rights laws. Illinois EPA is committed to ensuring that the Agency public participation process is available to all persons regardless of race, color, national origin (including LEP), age, disability, sex, or prior exercise of rights or opposition to actions prohibited under state and federal non-discrimination laws, as outlined in Illinois EPA’s [Notice of Nondiscrimination](#).

Illinois EPA utilizes the tools outlined in this Plan for additional measures that can be considered during outreach in areas of EJ concern, and across the State, as appropriate. The Agency

recognizes public participation as an active and intentional exchange between the Agency, the members of the public, and the regulated community.

By applying the framework presented in this Plan, Illinois EPA aims to:

- Create better opportunities and mechanisms to receive public input by working with community members and leaders.
- Encourage respectful and meaningful exchange between community members, organizations, and the regulated community.
- Provide information in plain language about the Agency’s programs and activities, except where specific language is otherwise required.
- Offer educational materials and other assistance to support community participation in the Agency’s activities and programs.
- Strengthen community ties and partnerships to build trust with the public.
- Work with community organizations to identify shared goals and opportunities for collaboration.
- Provide consistent communication in plain language about state law and regulations and Illinois EPA’s authority.
- Identify underserved communities and as needed, develop tailored communication plans that best serve their specific cultural and logistical needs.

## Illinois EPA Framework for Effective Public Participation

This framework outlines tools, strategies, and steps under three key components – EJ and Accessibility Considerations, Preparing for the Public Participation Process, and Steps in the Public Participation Process. Each component includes tools that may be utilized by the Illinois EPA to enhance the public participation process. This framework includes tools that may be used to assess public interest and enhance public participation in areas of EJ concern. Not all tools may be appropriate or utilized for all Agency programs or activities.

# **1. Environmental Justice and Accessibility Considerations**

## **A. Integrating EJ into Illinois EPA Decision-Making**

### **Identifying Areas of EJ Concern**

Illinois EPA is committed to integrating EJ considerations in all its programs and activities, including when conducting public participation efforts. The foundation of implementing this effort begins with identifying areas of EJ concern in the State of Illinois. Illinois EPA currently characterizes an “area of EJ concern” as a census block group or areas within one mile of a census block group with income below poverty, people of color, or both populations that are greater than twice the statewide average. This is a conservative approach compared to other available tools and the Illinois EPA definition errs on the side of inclusivity in its determination of an area of EJ concern. Later tools in this framework are used to gauge public interest once a project has been identified as within an area of EJ concern.

### **Mapping & Screening Tools**

The Illinois EPA utilizes two mapping tools to identify areas of EJ concern: EJ Start and EJSCREEN. The Agency created and utilizes a publicly available Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping tool, [Illinois EPA EJ Start](#). EJ Start includes data from the most recent American Community Survey, which is accessed via the data made available by U.S. EPA’s EJ mapping and screening tool, EJSCREEN. The Illinois EPA uses EJ Start to identify areas of EJ concern, to guide its outreach strategies and to provide input throughout Agency processes (i.e., screening permit applications, generating EJ notification letters, and other efforts) to enhance public outreach and participation.

The Illinois EPA also uses U.S. EPA’s mapping and screening tool, EJSCREEN, to generate EJ Community Reports, which include detailed information on community socioeconomic and environmental indicators. Community socioeconomic indicators include, but are not limited to, limited English-speaking households, low-income households, and people over age 64 and younger than 5. Environmental indicators include, but are not limited to, diesel particulate matter, toxic releases to air, lead paint exposure, proximity to Superfund sites, and proximity to wastewater discharges. Both tools aid in ascertaining information concerning a community’s needs and potential overburden.

## **B. Addressing Accessibility Needs**

The Agency addresses accessibility needs as part of the public participation process to ensure that public engagement is conducted in a non-discriminatory manner. Illinois EPA is committed to ensuring that its public outreach efforts are accessible to all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, LEP, disability, sex, and age. To support these efforts, the Illinois EPA has developed a Language Access Plan (LAP) and Disability Access Plan (DAP). The LAP and DAP serve as resources for understanding the Agency’s processes for obtaining translation and

interpretation services and obtaining accommodations to help support meaningful public participation.

### **Language Access**

The [LAP](#) guides the Agency's use of language translation and interpretation services. The LAP provides information concerning the Agency's processes and procedures to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals.

The LAP contains a list of vital documents identified by Illinois EPA that should be translated for LEP populations. The Agency will continue to review, identify, and translate vital documents in accordance with the LAP to ensure reasonable steps are taken to provide meaningful access to Agency programs and activities.

### **Disability Access**

Through the [DAP](#), the Illinois EPA is committed to ensuring individuals with disabilities are provided the opportunity for full participation in its programs, services, and activities through its compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as amended by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. Illinois EPA recognizes that individuals with disabilities may need accommodations or modifications to have equal opportunities to participate in or benefit from Illinois EPA's programs, services, and activities.

## **2. Preparing for the Public Participation Process**

### **A. Planning Hearings and Meetings – Logistics and Other Factors to Consider**

When planning hearings and meetings, the Agency applies the LAP and the DAP to ensure the following:

- The time, place, location, duration, and security at public hearings and meetings are determined and planned in a non-discriminatory manner.
  - Location should be accessible for disabled residents and meet the requirements of the ADA.
  - Location should have adequate lighting, restroom facilities, temperature control, and electrical capacity.
  - Agency should consider access to public transportation, as appropriate.
- Contingency plans are considered for unexpected events.
- Meetings are held at publicly accessible locations such as schools, churches, libraries, and community centers.



Consideration is also given to time and duration of hearings and meetings to maximize the opportunity for meaningful involvement from stakeholders. For example, the Illinois EPA may hold a meeting on the same subject matter at different times to accommodate different work schedules.

## B. Identifying Potential Stakeholders

An important step in preparing for the public participation process is to identify and consider key potential stakeholders. Examples of typical stakeholders include:

- Community groups and residents – The Illinois EPA is proactive in outreach and community engagement efforts, ensuring that communication with residents and community members occur early in an Agency action. This is an essential part in identifying the specific needs of the impacted community (accessibility needs, language access needs, etc.).
- Local units of government and officials – When appropriate or required, the Illinois EPA notifies local units of government and officials of an issue or action that may affect their community's residents and constituents.
- Regulated entities – For permitting matters, the Illinois EPA encourages regulated entities to meet with community stakeholders to promote open dialogue throughout the development of a project that is likely to be a matter of public interest.
- Other local, state, and federal agencies – The Illinois EPA recognizes the value in cross-agency collaboration across all levels of government. Depending on the type of Agency action or program, the Illinois EPA may be required to coordinate with other agencies on the public participation process across its and other agencies' programs.

## 3. Steps in the Public Participation Process

### A. Illinois EPA Staff Coordination

As highlighted throughout this plan, Illinois EPA recognizes that effective public participation emphasizes early and meaningful public involvement. As a regulatory agency, Illinois EPA manages and oversees numerous programs and actions, such as the development of regulations, which necessitates significant internal coordination. This requires strong coordination across multiple areas of the Agency. Illinois EPA's [Office of Community Relations](#) (OCR) and [Office of Environmental Justice](#) (OEJ) generally steer the public participation process, and Bureau staff (Air, Land, Water), as appropriate, work collaboratively with OCR and OEJ to enhance the public participation process around various programs and activities. OCR is primarily responsible for developing public notices and fact sheets for meetings or hearings and for managing the planning outreach (including public meetings and hearings). The Illinois EPA's programs actively collaborate with OCR in the planning and development of outreach events and materials. For example, when determining whether an Agency permitting action potentially impacts an area of

EJ concern, OCR also coordinates efforts with OEJ to determine the appropriate outreach, if any, based on, among other considerations, the following:

- The type of permit action:
  - New, modification, renewal.
  - Construction or operating.
- Location of the source.
- Existing environmental burdens as determined by available EJ screening tools.
- Type of source and contaminants of concern including media (air, land, water) and potential for community exposure.
- Level of community interest.

## B. Regulated Entity Engagement

The Illinois EPA strongly encourages community outreach performed by the regulated entities. An important aspect of meaningful public outreach occurs, ideally, prior to the submission of a permit application or other information requesting an Agency action. The Illinois EPA encourages regulated entities to gain knowledge of the local community by engaging elected officials, community leaders, local organizations, and residents, and to provide information about the facility and any proposed projects.

## C. Prepare Information and Outreach Materials

Information and outreach materials notify and educate the public about Agency actions so that they can meaningfully engage in the public participation process. The Illinois EPA endeavors to help the public understand an Agency's proposed action and know how to ask questions, obtain more information, and submit comments. Not all tools will be used for all Agency matters. The Agency determines what materials to prepare based on the level of interest expressed and the nature of the proposed Agency action.

### **Communications**

The Illinois EPA develops and provides materials that are accessible and in plain language, in accordance with the Agency's LAP and DAP. This includes the following:

- During a public notice and comment period, the Illinois EPA provides a variety of mechanisms for the public to submit comments on proposed actions. The Illinois EPA also considers limitations to public participation such as limited Internet access.
- The Illinois EPA posts contact information on the Illinois EPA website and on materials published by the Agency, including phone numbers and email addresses, to allow the public to communicate with appropriate staff.

- The Illinois EPA maintains a Teletypewriter (TTY) system that allows a Deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired person to communicate over the phone.

### Illinois EPA Fact Sheets

Fact sheets can be a useful tool to communicate information on environmental issues or proposed Agency actions to a variety of stakeholders. Illinois EPA develops and uses fact sheets as one way of providing plain language summaries explaining Agency actions, including proposed permitting projects, enforcement resolution, rulemaking, and remedial activities.

As appropriate, and as described in the Accessibility section of this Plan, the Illinois EPA translates fact sheets consistent with the procedures in the LAP. Illinois EPA may also make fact sheets available on the Agency's webpage. Hard copies of fact sheets will be made available for persons without Internet access when requested by calling [Office of Community Relations](#) staff at (217) 524-3735. To view examples of site fact sheets developed by the Illinois EPA, click [here](#) or visit <https://epa.illinois.gov/topics/community-relations/sites.html>.

### Illinois EPA Website

Illinois EPA's website provides information related to Agency programs, activities, and decision-making processes. Additionally, the public can learn about recent Illinois EPA News (e.g., press releases) [here](#).

Direct links to key Illinois EPA offices, programs, and services:

- [General Information](#)
- [Air Quality](#)
- [Cleanup Programs](#)
- [Community Relations](#)
- [Drinking Water & Water Quality](#)
- [Environmental Education](#)
- [Environmental Justice](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#)
- [Grants & Loans](#)
- [Land Pollution & Waste Disposal](#)
- [Language & Disability Access](#)
- [Public Notices](#)

### EJ Listserv

Through its EJ Listserv, Illinois EPA distributes information regarding activities that relate to and/or impact areas of EJ concern generally. This includes announcements of local, state, and federal EJ activities, such as issuance of EJ guidance, funding opportunities, and engagement opportunities. To receive Illinois EPA EJ Listserv email updates, individuals may sign up [here](#).

## D. Develop Agency Notifications

### **EJ Notification Letters**

To enhance public outreach on permit transactions in communities of EJ concern, the Illinois EPA sends EJ notification letters to stakeholders who sign up to receive notifications. Certain permit changes such as administrative changes (e.g., facility name changes, etc.) may not undergo the EJ notification process. EJ notification letters are a cornerstone of Illinois EPA's Office of Environmental Justice's (OEJ) programmatic efforts and provide information about a proposed project by a regulated entity early in the permitting process. By sending EJ notification letters early in the permit review process, interested stakeholders have extra time to request additional information by contacting Agency staff or submitting a document request (<https://epa.illinois.gov/foia.html>).

Most permit actions in Illinois do not require a public notice, thus the EJ notification letter is often the primary method to alert interested stakeholders of a pending permit action and to provide an early opportunity to participate in the process and offer input and feedback to the decisional process. Because these letters are typically sent early in the review process, before a submission has undergone technical review, information in the letter may be cursory.

Outlined below are ways in which Illinois EPA promotes EJ notification letters:

- All EJ notification letters are posted to the [Illinois EPA website](#).
- Any member of the public may sign up to receive EJ notification letters by visiting [here](#).
- Periodically, the EJ Listserv announces the purpose of EJ notification letters and how to receive them. The Illinois EPA also encourages the Illinois Commission on EJ to share information on how to receive EJ notification letters through their networks.
- Illinois EPA shares EJ notification letters and sign-up methods through social media, as appropriate.

To learn more about the EJ notification process, please see Illinois EPA's [EJ Notification Process fact sheet](#). The EJ notification letter includes a distribution list of all organizations the letter was sent to. If you identify as an organization when signing up to receive EJ notification letters, this information will be represented on the letter's distribution list.

### **Public Notices**

Illinois EPA issues public notice of proposed permit decisions, proposed Agency rulemakings, and other proposed Agency actions as required by statute or at the Director's discretion. Notices are drafted pursuant to applicable statutory and regulatory requirements and written in plain language, except where specific public notice language is otherwise required.

When publication is required, notices are published to the [Illinois EPA website](#). Under circumstances where there is a statutory requirement or where the Illinois EPA believes that a

specific outreach goal may be facilitated, a notice may be published in a newspaper. When used, newspaper publications are placed as display ads. To sign up for Illinois EPA public notices, contact the [Office of Community Relations](#) at (217) 524-3735. Illinois EPA public notices include information and instructions on:

- How to submit written comments.
- The location and means of access of any information repositories (typically available at a public library or regional Illinois EPA office).
- How to request a hearing.
- How to register for the hearing to ensure time for commenting.
- How to request language assistance services and/or reasonable accommodations and auxiliary aids and services, including if any requests must be submitted in advance.

### **Other Notification Methods**

For Agency actions that undergo a formal public participation process, Illinois EPA may use other available resources to provide meaningful notification. These additional resources include:

- Social Media – For example, the Illinois EPA posts permit public notices to a specific X.com feed, @ILepanotices. Additionally, Illinois EPA provides more general information to the public through its main social media platforms to better disseminate important Agency news and environmental information to communities across Illinois. Official updates, news, and tips from the Illinois EPA can be found through its Illinois EPA [X \(Twitter\)](#) page, [Facebook](#) page, and [LinkedIn](#) page.
- Email distribution – The Illinois EPA uses e-mail distribution for timely and immediate notification to interested parties.
- Mail distribution – The Illinois EPA uses mail distribution for those whose preference is to receive a mailed copy of a notice.
- Website – The Illinois EPA posts notices and other information on its website. This improves timeliness, allows for postings to be searchable, and allows the interested party to peruse information at their leisure, including after-hours.
- Local media platforms and contacts, including community leaders and community groups.

## **E. Host Public Meetings and/or Public Hearings (if applicable)**

Public meetings and public hearings are key methods of public participation used by Illinois EPA. Meetings and hearings may occur in person or virtually, depending on the accessibility needs of participants and regulatory and statutory requirements. The degree of public interest set forth by statutes and regulations for Illinois EPA programs and activities helps guide whether a public hearing or meeting will be held. Although both meetings and hearings provide the public with an opportunity to engage in Agency actions and decision-making processes, there are distinctions between a public meeting and hearing.

	<b>Public Hearing</b>	<b>Public Meeting</b>
Authority	Parameters defined by statute and regulation.	In most cases, not defined by statute or regulation.
Basis for Holding	Request from the public, elected officials, or affected regulated entity, or at the Illinois EPA's discretion.	Often held at the request of the public, elected officials, or regulated entity.
Format	Set forth in relevant program regulations. Includes use of an Illinois EPA hearing officer.	Varies based on the specific issue. May be hosted or co-hosted by the Illinois EPA, units of local government, non-governmental organizations, or a regulated entity.
Content	Informational presentation and a discussion between the hearing panel and participants are limited to the specific Agency action at issue.	Open dialogue but may include an informational presentation and structured discussion with attendees.
Transcription or Recording	A recording or transcription of the hearing is required.	Recording or transcription not required.
Public Comments	Oral and written testimony accepted at the hearing. A public comment period for submission of written comments follows the hearing.	In most cases, there is no formal public comment period.
Responsiveness Summary	Illinois EPA provides responses to all comments received.	Responsiveness summary not required.

Because public hearing requirements are defined by applicable state and federal laws, the Agency follows those legal requirements in determining whether to hold a public hearing. During a public comment period, comments may be submitted to Illinois EPA (1) in writing, via conventional mail, or email, and (2) orally at hearings.

For virtual hearings and meetings, Illinois EPA will provide a mechanism for anyone without internet access to participate through telephone access or other alternatives. Public notices also include instructions on how to request language assistance services, including if any accessibility requests should be submitted by a date certain before an event.

## F. Consideration of Public Comments (if applicable)

Public comment periods provide a way for interested parties to submit written comments on a proposed Agency action. If the Illinois EPA holds a public hearing, oral comments are considered as well. Public comment periods are typically 30 days if no public hearing is held. If a public hearing is held, additional time is provided in accordance with the relevant authority. Illinois EPA may extend the public comment period deadline based on requests received by interested stakeholders, as appropriate, under applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Notices for public comment periods for the various draft permits within Illinois EPA Bureaus can be found [here](#) or by visiting <https://epa.illinois.gov/public-notices.html>.

## G. Agency Decision and Follow-Up

After holding a public hearing and at the conclusion of the public comment period, Illinois EPA reviews all comments received and develops a responsiveness summary document. This document includes information on how public comments were considered as part of the process. The Illinois EPA develops the responsiveness summary to address public comments from a scientific or technical, legal, and overall communications standpoint.

The responsiveness summary will provide information on the nature of the regulatory transaction, outreach process, contacts, and responses to significant comments made during the outreach process.

Illinois EPA has certain limitations on what may be considered in Agency actions and decision-making processes based on statutory and regulatory authority. Illinois EPA permits, rulemakings, and other actions are based on the application of science and the law. Comments, both technical and non-technical, may help identify facts that may not have been considered in a draft permit, proposed Agency rulemaking, or other Agency action, and offer solutions to reach protective, reasonable regulation of the proposed activity. However, the Illinois EPA's ability to act on certain comments may be limited based on applicable statutory or regulatory authority.

## Conclusion

This Plan is intended to be responsive to the people of the State of Illinois and provide the public with an understanding of the Agency's key efforts to strengthen public participation. This Plan was distributed for public comment via the Agency's website, social media, and EJ Listserv. Illinois EPA encourages the public to provide comments and welcomes suggestions and feedback for improving its public participation process and community engagement efforts.

## Additional Information and Resources

Structured public engagement is, as outlined in the Plan, one of several means by which the Illinois EPA is responsive to questions or concerns from the public. Below are additional resources related to other avenues by which the Illinois EPA provides public access to additional Agency information.

### Access to Additional Agency Information

#### **Illinois EPA Online Resources**

To provide transparency and easier public access to Agency documents, the Illinois EPA has created an online tool, [IEPA Document Explorer](#). The public can access Document Explorer to search for information on permitting, inspection, compliance, enforcement, and regulatory activities relating to particular sites/facilities:

- Air construction and operating permits;
- National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) water discharge permits;
- Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) technical documents;
- Voluntary Site Remediation Program records from 2004 to present;
- Final Compliance Commitment Agreements executed since January 1, 2014; and
- State Response Action Program sites technical documents.

Through IEPA Document Explorer, individuals can search for locations of interest by site name, location address, and/or Bureau ID, or by a geographic mapping tool for 475,000 documents consisting of more than 13.5 million pages. General information about facilities, such as their Bureau ID, can be obtained through the Illinois EPA [Agency Facility Inventory and Information Search System](#) (AFISS) website.

In addition to materials included in the Document Explorer, the Illinois EPA makes available copies of Compliance Commitment Agreements executed since January 1, 2014, and other enforcement orders on its [website](#). These documents can be screened using numerous filters, including party name, location, date, and penalty amount.

#### **Freedom of Information Act**

The public may also access Agency records by submitting a request pursuant to the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) ([5 ILCS 140](#)). The Agency's corresponding rules ("Access to Public Records of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency," [2 Ill. Adm. Code 1828](#)) provide the framework by which Illinois EPA public records may be requested, accessed, inspected, and duplicated.



Requests for information may be submitted through one of the following means: the interactive [FOIA Request Web Form](#), through fax, the U.S. mail, or special carrier. Of these options, the FOIA Request Web Form allows for the quickest response to your request.

To submit a FOIA request using the Illinois EPA FOIA Request Web Form, the Agency requires that FOIA requesters create an account. An account is not required to submit requests via fax, U.S. mail, or special carrier. Anonymous requests will be accepted and processed and can be submitted without creating an account by submitting via fax, U.S. mail, special carrier, or e-mail. More information can be found on the [Illinois EPA FOIA webpage](#).