



This brochure answers some common questions small businesses ask about air quality regulations and the permitting process. It is intended as an introduction, not as a comprehensive guide.

Regulations, requirements, and the permitting process vary greatly from facility to facility, and we encourage all small businesses to seek assistance as needed. Environmental consultants at the Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers' Environmental Management Assistance Program (EMAP) can provide no cost, confidential assistance throughout the permitting process.

**Call us at**  
**877-ask-emap**  
**with your air compliance questions**

The Environmental Management Assistance Program of the Pennsylvania SBDCs is a partnership funded, in part, by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Departments of Community and Economic Development and Environmental Protection, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and the participating colleges and universities. All programs and services are provided on a non-discriminatory basis. SBA cannot endorse any products, opinions, or services of any external parties or activities.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Air Permitting

**Does the size of my business matter?**  
Air permitting regulations are based on the amount of air pollutants that a business can or does emit, not on business size.

**What are common air pollutants and how are they regulated?**  
The most common air pollutants are carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NOx), sulfur oxides (SOx), particulate matter (PM10), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and hazardous air pollutants (HAPs). Operations that emit one or more of these pollutants may be subject to permitting regulations. This depends not only on actual pollution emitted, but also on the potential to emit.

**How do I determine the total emissions from my facility?**  
Look at all sources at your facility that emit pollutants. A "source" is any piece of equipment with potential to emit pollutants. Each individual source is subject to regulations.

*More Questions and Answers are inside!*

The Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) work with small firms to help them compete and grow in today's highly competitive global economy. Combining the expertise of a professional staff with the resources of the state's best colleges and universities, the SBDCs provide high quality business management consulting, information, and educational programs that build small firms' capacities to compete in domestic and international markets. For more information and locations, visit [www.pasbdc.org](http://www.pasbdc.org).

The environmental and energy professionals of the Pennsylvania SBDCs' Environmental Management Assistance Program (EMAP) perform on-site consultations to assist businesses with:

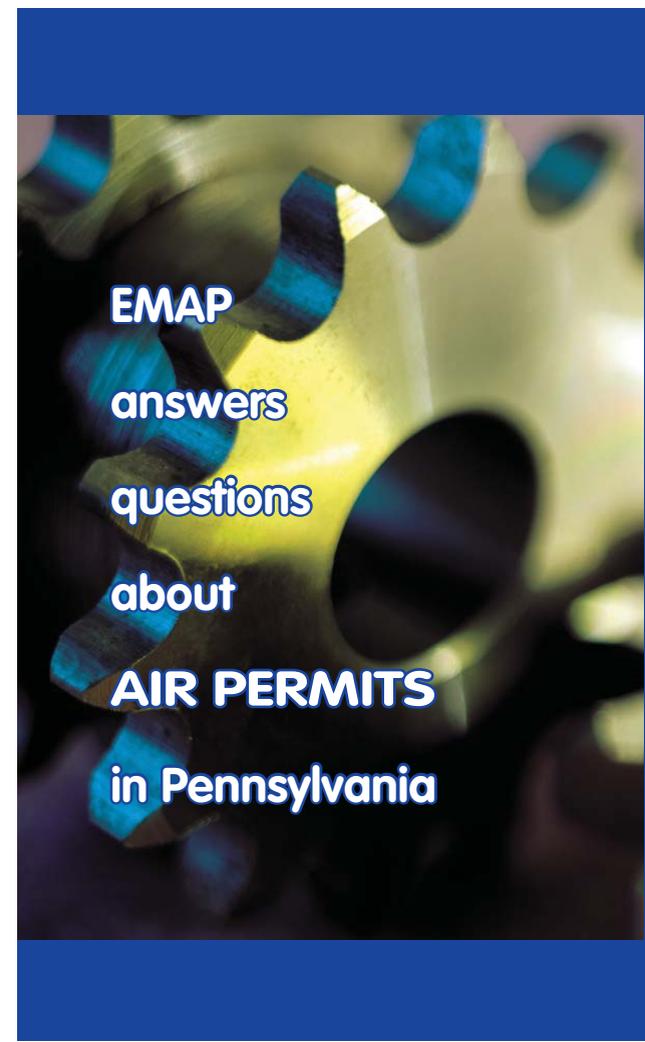
- Environmental regulatory requirements
- Energy efficiency
- New technology development
- Finding sources of financing
- Strategies for "greening" your business

 For more information, call the EMAP toll-free confidential hotline at **877-ask-emap**, email us at [questions@askemap.org](mailto:questions@askemap.org), or visit [www.askemap.org](http://www.askemap.org).

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### What types of equipment typically produce air emissions?

Boilers, incinerators, shot blast/sandblasting units, turbines, internal combustion engines, heat treating operations, portable crushers, emergency generators, storage vessels (for fuel, chemicals, etc), woodworking operations, degreasing operations, compressors for natural gas operations, paint booths, furnaces, and generally any type of operation or process that vents outdoors will produce air emissions.

### Do all air emission sources require permits?

No! The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has exempted some types of air pollutant sources from permit requirements because their emissions are of minor significance. Businesses that meet exemption requirements do not need to apply for an air quality permit.

### How can I make sure the source(s) at my facility are exempt from permitting?

You can submit a "Request for Determination" (RFD) to your DEP regional office. Sources that fall under certain thresholds are exempt and do not need to file for a permit. Businesses may also use the RFD\*Online. Both online and paper formats can be found at [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us) (keyword: RFD).

Disclaimer: The information in this brochure is provided as general information and is not provided nor intended to act as a substitute for legal advice or other professional services.

### If I do need an air quality permit, what are the next steps?

**1.** Check if your operation is eligible for a DEP General Permit. DEP developed "general permits" for air pollution sources that are similar in operation and emission control requirements. For these specified sources, a business can use a shortened form to apply for both plan approval and an operating permit at once.

A general permit describes all air quality requirements applicable to sources in an identified group. Although it is convenient to apply for the general permit, be aware that it can be more restrictive. You must meet all specified conditions and you cannot modify a general permit.

**2.** If a general permit is not available for your process, you must obtain permission—known as "plan approval"—before you begin construction or purchase equipment. You will need to file a separate plan approval application with DEP or your local agency for each individual source.

Plan approval applications consist of application forms, compliance review forms, proof of municipal notice, and the application fee. Your regional DEP office will review the application and may ask you to submit revisions. Once DEP approves your application, this allows you to install and operate the source on a temporary basis. Depending on your facility, you may need to apply for an operating permit at this point.

**3.** After installing the source, you must obtain an operating permit before you begin normal operation. The plan approval allows temporary operation so that DEP or your local agency can inspect the source. If there is not a General Permit to cover all regulated sources at your facility, then you must apply for a facility operating permit.

The operating permit may set conditions on how you operate the source(s); for example, limiting the hours of operation, monitoring pressure drop across a scrubber, recording the types of paints applied, or reporting malfunctions of the emissions control device. The permit conditions are based on the plan approval. You will be given the opportunity to comment on your plan approval or permit before it is issued. You also have the right to appeal.

### How do I add a new source at an existing facility?

If you are adding a new source of air pollution, you should first check if the source is on the exemption list. If not, you must submit a request for determination, apply for plan approval, and/or apply for an operating permit. DEP will add the new source to an existing permit if you already hold one of the three types of facility wide permits.

### Do I need a facility wide permit?

There are several types of facility wide permits in Pennsylvania. Whether or not you are required to obtain one depends on the total amount of actual and potential air emissions from your entire facility. If actual emissions from your facility are below certain set levels for various pollutants, you do not need any type of permit.

### How long will it take to get a permit?

The length of time varies greatly, depending on the type of permit as well as the facility size, type and location. The best advice is to be prepared and plan well in advance if you think you need a permit. A plan approval or permit can take up to six months to be issued.

### What do I do when I receive my permit?

Read it over carefully! All permits contain record-keeping and reporting requirements that begin the day the permit is issued.

### Where can I go for assistance?

Contact the Pennsylvania SBDC Environmental Management Assistance Program to receive help from an environmental consultant. All EMAP consulting services are strictly confidential and offered at no cost. Call us at **877-ask-emap**, email us at [questions@askemap.org](mailto:questions@askemap.org), or visit us at [www.askemap.org](http://www.askemap.org).

More information about air quality regulations is available through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection at [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us).

Philadelphia and Allegheny counties operate their own air management programs with separate permit processes. If your facility is located in either one of these counties, contact the following agencies for additional information:

- Allegheny County Health Department:  
(412) 578-8103
- Philadelphia County Air Management Services:  
(215) 823-7584