



A Guide for Businesses for Making Presentations at Informational Meetings and Public Hearings

Certain applications for air quality permits are subject to public review. When an informational meeting or a public hearing is requested, the company applying for the permit is required to participate. The following suggestions are offered in the interest of making the meeting/hearing as productive as possible for both the company and the public.

Your Company's Representative Should be Able to . . .

Speak knowledgeably about the company and give a comprehensive presentation about the proposed project. Describe the following:

- What product(s) the company produces
- What the new project is and what it will do
- How the product is made
- What the waste byproducts are and how they are handled
- Equipment overview
- Overview of environmental impacts and how the company will control emissions
- Permits and/or approvals being sought

The presentation should last no longer than 20 minutes for an information meeting and 10 minutes for a public hearing. Remember that community members are probably not engineers or scientists. Use plain, clear language and avoid jargon and acronyms.

Visual Aids

Presenters are welcome and encouraged to use visual aids during their presentations. These can be printed handouts (photocopies, brochures), videotape, overhead transparencies, slides, and graphs and charts. The company may even display finished products.

The company should make arrangements to bring special equipment needed for the presentation or obtain it from the meeting location.

Positives and Negatives

Emphasize the positives that are important to the community. For example, if your company is applying to replace old equipment with new equipment that is cleaner and more energy efficient, it is beneficial for the community and important for the public to know.

Do not attempt to downplay or avoid stating facts that may be viewed as negative news, such as the fact that emissions may increase or that certain pieces of existing equipment will remain in use. Present all available and pertinent information openly and straightforwardly, for such information may be pertinent to the permit review and is of interest to the public.

Community Concerns

At times, issues may be raised and questions may be asked that are not specific to the air quality permit. These are often quality of life issues that citizens believe may change with the issuance of a new permit. Address issues important to citizens, such as:

- The company's hours of operations
- Amount of vehicular traffic
- Noise caused by the production processes

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Be open-minded and listen to citizen concerns. When issues appear to be unrelated to the air permit, company representatives may feel reluctant to discuss these issues. Such issues are of great importance to local residents and a response should be provided when possible.

Other Things to Consider

Offer your business card and invite citizens to call. Companies with existing operations often conduct tours of their plant and facilities to establish good public relations.

Consider whether a tour is feasible or appropriate. If possible, communicate with the community before the formal public review process begins – attend community meetings or talk with community leaders and local elected officials. The Department's experience has been that in the majority of cases that early communication is beneficial to all parties.

Information Meeting and Public Hearing Formats

For the information meeting, the Department's Public Participation Coordinator (coordinator) begins with welcoming the audience and an opening statement. The coordinator then turns the meeting over to the company for their presentation. After the presentation, the coordinator will open the meeting to citizen comments. When questions are asked, the coordinator will advise either the Department's permit engineer or the company to answer the question. When the question and answer period is over, the coordinator will end the meeting with closing comments.

For the public hearing, the company should give a brief presentation (10 minutes) of the project. The audience is then given a brief period (20 minutes) to ask questions of the company or the Department. During the public hearing, the coordinator acts as the hearing officer. At this point the public hearing goes on record and the coordinator provides an opening statement identifying the company and the application. The Department's permit engineer is called next to make a statement. Then elected officials and members of the audience are invited to make comments for the record. After all comments are recorded, the coordinator makes a closing statement.

If you have questions about the public review process, please telephone the permit engineer, or ARMA's Public Participation Coordinator, [Robert Maddox](#), at (410)-537-3260.

