

Guide for Environmental Plan Review*

Who needs to read this guide?

Architects and expeditors with building permit applications in the Standard Plan Review (SPR) process in the ProjectDox (PDox) system. If your permit has an Environmental Review, it means you probably need to obtain air pollution control permits from CDPH for “regulated equipment” or “regulated areas” included in your project.

What is an air pollution control permit?

Pursuant to City ordinance, CDPH requires operators of certain types of equipment to obtain a permit prior to this equipment’s installation and operation. The permit itself can be one or more pages and must be posted in a conspicuous place at or near the regulated equipment or area for which they are issued .

Businesses found by CDPH to be operating without required air pollution control permits or certificates of operation will be fined and may be ordered to shut down.

When is an air pollution control permit required?

Whenever an applicant plans on installing or operating regulated equipment. See section “What equipment needs to be permitted?” on page 2 of this guide for more information.

How much does an air pollution control permit cost?

When the equipment or area is installed pursuant to a building permit issued under Chapter 14A-4 of the Municipal Code and the required permit fees are paid in accordance with that chapter, no additional fee is required to obtain an air pollution control permit. The cost of an SPR permit covers the environmental permitting of included equipment.

What is the Certificate of Operation?

A certificate of operation (COO) is an annual requirement for the continued operation of permitted equipment or areas. It requires an annual fee, along with a self-certification of any changes made to the permitted equipment or area. Some equipment is exempt from the COO requirement, such as boilers and furnaces. The facility owner or operator is responsible for maintaining the annual COO, which also must be posted in a conspicuous place at the facility.

Businesses found by CDPH to be operating without required air pollution control permits or certificates of operation will be fined and may be ordered to shut down.

* This guide is for general information only. It is not intended to replace, interpret, or modify any federal, state, local, or other law of any kind, nor does it provide or constitute legal advice.

How do I apply for the permit?

The process for getting an air pollution control permit is as follows:

- Go to ipi.cityofchicago.org and create an account with your information (email, name, address, phone, etc.), and log in with this account. Note that the confirmation email does not always come in right away.
- Create a new air quality permit at the same address as the building permit. If the system does not allow a permit at this address contact your project manager at the department of buildings for assistance.
- For 'Contractor / Operator' find your company in the company contact list by searching for it. If your company is not listed, you will still need to search for it before you are given the option to "add new company."
- The 'Property Owner' information is the same as that found in the corresponding building permit application. First search the contact list, then add the property owner if not present. **Note that you must provide a valid email address for the property owners or they may become liable for non-compliance due to missed communications from CDPH.**
- Select "Air Quality Control Permit" for "Type of Work" in Job Description section, except if your building permit is for a motor vehicle refinishing shop or an on-premises dry cleaning facility; select the corresponding application type in those cases.
- Select the proper SIC code for the business associated with your building permit application; use the search link if more information is needed. If it is only heating equipment for residential or commercial mixed use to be permitted, select '3433' as your SIC. Dry cleaners are SIC 7216, and vehicle refinishers are SIC 7531.
- Add make and model number for each piece of equipment, as well as the quantity of each.
- Make sure to agree to terms and conditions with the check box.
- At the screen where you are asked to pay, print the page as pdf and upload pdf into 'environmental' folder of PDox with the ENVAIR number as the filename. Leave application in 'Fees' milestone.

At this point the environmental reviewer will contact you through the SPR process with any needed corrections, or will approve the permit if no corrections are necessary and no preapproval inspection is required.

What equipment needs to be permitted?

All regulated equipment and regulated areas, as defined below, must be permitted.

Common equipment

The most common equipment types encountered in SPR are boilers* (code 090A, B, C, D), furnaces* (090A, B, C, D), kitchen hoods (137), expansion tanks (995), and emergency generators (002).

Less common equipment

Examples of facilities that may have less common regulated equipment or areas include, but are not limited to, facilities that require a state or federal environmental permit and businesses such as coffee roasters, breweries, smokehouses, commercial/industrial food production facilities, and manufacturing plants. Please review the following definitions to ensure that permits are obtained for any non-exempt regulated equipment which may not be reflected on the documents filed in the building permit application.

- “Regulated equipment or area” means any combustion equipment, pollution control device, process equipment, or process area.
- “Combustion equipment” means any equipment or device which generates heat or energy by burning solid, liquid, or gaseous fuel or other material, and which emits or has the potential to emit air contaminants. Combustion equipment includes, but is not limited to, boilers, furnaces, ovens, incinerators, and generators.
- “Pollution control device” means any equipment or device used to eliminate, prevent, reduce or control the emission of air contaminants to the outdoor atmosphere. Pollution control devices include, but are not limited to, scrubbers, dust collectors, thermal oxidizers, cyclones, mist collectors, catalytic converters, and electrostatic precipitators.
- “Process area” means any location within a facility where chemical, industrial, commercial, or manufacturing operations are conducted, and which emits or has the potential to emit air contaminants. Activities conducted in a process area include, but are not limited to, motor vehicle repairs, grinding, sawing, sanding, cutting, buffing, packaging, assembling, machining, blending, coating, plating, or mixing.

*Note that an air pollution control permit is not required for water heaters that have a capacity of less than 200,000 BTU/h, nor are they required for furnaces which serve a single family residence or which serve up to 3 residential dwelling units. This equipment should be omitted from the equipment list in the online permit.

- “Process equipment” means any equipment or device used in any industrial, commercial, or manufacturing operations for the mechanical, thermal, or chemical treatment or processing of a raw material, product, or byproduct, and which emits or has the potential to emit air contaminants. Process equipment includes, but is not limited to, tanks, kettles, converters, CNC machines, kilns, ovens, non-residential food preparation units vented to the outdoor atmosphere via a hood, crucibles, stills, dryers, roasters, crushers, grinders, blenders, mixers, reactors, regenerators, separators, filters, spray booths, columns, classifiers, screeners, quenchers, cookers, washers, scrubbers, mills, condensers, absorbers, balers, compactors, unfired pressure vessels, indirect fired vessels, unit heaters, infra red heaters, makeup air units with heating elements, agitators, and sedimentation and classification devices. Process equipment also includes, but is not limited to, equipment or devices required for water conditioning, treatment of industrial and municipal wastes, metallurgical processing, pulp and paper production, food processing, dry cleaning, petrochemical production and other similar operations.

For these types of equipment, please select the equipment category that most nearly matches the regulated equipment or area being installed.

Facilities may also be required to submit business licenses, mechanical general arrangement drawings, equipment datasheets, and other information about the facility. CDPH may require supplemental information about the environmental impact of a proposed facility as well.

Pre-approval inspections

For some new business, CDPH may require an inspection prior to issuing air pollution control permits. In these cases, CDPH may allow the building permit to proceed but withhold the issuance of the CDPH air pollution control permits. When this happens, the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection will also be advised to withhold business licensure until pre-approval inspections are complete and the air pollution control permits are granted.

What if I need permits for additional equipment after environmental approval?

Once the environmental review for your building project is complete, any additional air pollution control permits must be applied for separately. Multiple pieces of equipment can be combined into a single permit application as before, but each piece of equipment will be charged the \$150 application fee.

Additional Information and References

The legal requirements for air pollution control permits and certificates of operation and related compliance requirements and exemptions are set forth in sections 11-4-600 through 11-4-990 of the Municipal Code of Chicago.

If you have any questions about this guide, please call (312) 744-8026 or email cdphpermits@cityofchicago.org.