



Creating guidance when to do air modeling for environmental review

Why it's important

Environmental review staff looked at EAWs going back to 2000 and discovered that:

- ▶ Air assessments for permits — which assess compliance to air quality standards — may not satisfy the needs of EAWs, which look at the effects of the project on the environment and surrounding area.
- ▶ Refined modeling, which takes into account a broad range of air quality factors, may be overkill for some EAWs.

What we did

In spring of 2013, we launched a continuous improvement project on conducting air assessments as part of EAWs.

- ▶ We created a new guidance document for staff working on EAWs.
- ▶ We are developing new forms.
- ▶ We are using screening values developed by the EPA to determine when complex air dispersion modeling is required.

What's the issue?

We use air dispersion modeling, a process that looks at facility features, meteorological data, and other factors to predict the impact of emissions on air quality in the area.

However, Environmental Review staff didn't have clear guidance on when and how to do air modeling as part of the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) review process. But what project factors should trigger an air modeling review?

Results

In the new process, project proposers do simplified modeling on each of six pollutants to determine if more extensive modeling is required

In addition, a decision-tracking form will internally track air assessment decisions and be discussed at risk managers' meetings. The changes will:

- ▶ Give staff clarity on expectations.
- ▶ Provide greater predictability and accountability.
- ▶ Result in better project documentation.

The new screening process will be reviewed when the following projects are complete to determine if the process is accomplishing our goals:

- ▶ UofM cogeneration heat and power plant
- ▶ Flint Hills Resources cogeneration heat and power plant, and refinery upgrades
- ▶ Anaerobic digester at Renville Renewables
- ▶ Gas-fired power plant for Owatonna Energy
- ▶ Biodiesel production expansion at REG Inc.

