



UPDATE

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Public Availability Sessions Held by ADEM



ADEM staff answer questions at Uniontown Public Availability Session

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management continues to improve operations to seek more input from the public both in person and through the Department's website. ADEM has numerous reports, documents, records, forms, and reports available at www.adem.alabama.gov, and the Department also holds events, conferences, and public hearings designed to give everyone increased access to ADEM's activities, and participation into the decision-making process.

To enhance community outreach, ADEM continues to conduct public availability sessions to enable people to have interaction with staff, ask questions, review maps and charts, and express comments and concerns face-to-face.

(Colbert County) in the northwestern corner of the state, and another in the "Black Belt," in Uniontown (Perry County) in west Alabama. Both events were attended by more than 50 people, including local public officials, business owners, concerned citizens, and media representatives.

The public availability session in Tuscumbia was conducted on October 23, in regards to permits for a proposed limestone quarry. The session in Uniontown was held on November 18, regarding the proposed issuance of a major source operating permit to Arrowhead Landfill, and a modification to the Solid Waste permit. Both sessions allowed people in attendance to ask questions and get more information, and both were followed by a public hearing to enable people to make oral and written comments onto the public record.

Commission Hears Good News at December Meeting

The Alabama Environmental Management Commission held its sixth and final meeting of 2025 on December 12 at ADEM's main office in Montgomery. The Commission considered the proposed amendments to ADEM's General Administration Regulations and Hazardous Waste Program Regulations, and unanimously voted to amend both, and then heard a report from ADEM Director Ed Poolos.

In his comments to the Commission, Poolos covered several topics. He mentioned the end of the federal government shutdown, which has enabled ADEM to resume drawing funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Poolos recognized ADEM staff who have recently completed Certified Public Manager training through Auburn University at Montgomery. He ended his report with the good news that Alabama has reached attainment status for ambient air quality levels in every area of the state.



The AEMC met on December 12

Voluntary Testing of Lead Levels in Drinking Water Completed

Multiple agencies worked together to test childcare facilities and schools



ADEM worked with multiple agencies to test water at childcare facilities and schools

To promote public confidence and to help schools and childcare facilities (Daycare, Pre-K, Head Start) reduce exposure to possible high levels of lead in drinking water, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and other state agencies assisted facilities and schools across the state with voluntary testing for lead in drinking water.

The program was funded by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This grant started in 2020, and was an expansion of a successful three-year sampling grant program in 2017-2019 for Alabama's public schools. ADEM recruited the Alabama Rural Water Association, who hosted training sessions for facility personnel and provided on-site technical assistance.

EPA finalized Lead and Copper Rule Revisions and Improvements over the last four years, which now include a requirement for public water systems to sample all childcare

facilities and elementary schools. This program has provided an excellent opportunity for childcare facilities and schools to be prepared to work with their public water systems to establish meaningful sampling programs going forward. During the testing program, representatives from ADEM and partnering agencies and organizations visited staff from the facilities and schools. These visits consisted of an introduction to the program, instructions for sampling, and a sampling kit, which was returned to the state drinking water laboratory for analysis.

Under this program, more than 5,000 samples were analyzed at over 1,100 schools and childcare facilities. ADEM provided a copy of the results to the facility and/or school, and a report of all results was placed on the ADEM website for online access by the public.

Childhood exposure to lead has long been a concern of researchers and medical professionals, and ADEM was pleased to work with the Alabama Department of Human Resources, the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, and the State Department of Education to conduct this voluntary testing program.

Break-to-Educate Highlights External Affairs

ADEM's Break-to-Educate session in September used the title of "What is your ADEM Style?"

Lynn Battle, Chief of ADEM's External Affairs Branch, presented various tips, insight, and guidance that everyone working at the Department could take advantage of to become a more efficient employee and manager. The presentation focused on ways for employees to learn more about the overall mission of ADEM, and to make connections with co-workers.

The event also included segments on being prepared for community engagement, and to be aware of current environmental issues. Battle discussed how to appropriately talk to the general public or the news media, and how to handle questions and inquiries to find and disseminate the correct information.

"We are all ADEM," said Battle. "We always need to be professional and courteous. You might be the first person from ADEM that people have had a chance to talk to about an issue, project, or program."

More than 40 employees were in attendance for the presentation in the main hearing room. Parts of Battle's presentation offered guidance for supervisors such as how to motivate your staff to enjoy their work, preparing them to one day be supervisors, and thinking of how to teach staff specific ways to be more efficient and effective. She also encouraged everyone to "always keep learning" and continuing to do the great work that every employee at ADEM performs daily, as well as meeting others from around the Department.



External Affairs was discussed at Break-to-Educate event

Annual Surface Water Meeting Draws a Crowd

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management recently hosted its annual Surface Water Meeting at the Wetumpka Civic Center. Public water system operators, consultants, and engineers conferred on a number of surface water issues and topics at the 26th annual event in October.

ADEM environmental engineers and other presenters discussed important topics, reviewed ongoing surface water projects, presented updates on various regulations for drinking water systems, and provided updates on operator certification.

The meeting helped demonstrate how the ADEM drinking water regulations meet federal requirements and how the Department partners with public drinking water systems to ensure compliance, lessen environmental impacts, and safeguard public health. Participants were presented with the latest information on operator certification, drinking water and tank maintenance, water conservation, and cyber security.

ADEM Director Ed Poolos made opening remarks at the meeting.

“Providing drinking water professionals with the latest treatment and safety information is an important step in safeguarding Alabama’s water, and it helps to ensure continued compliance for our public water systems,” said Poolos.

An update on the Department’s Area Wide Optimization Program (AWOP) and awards were also presented at the meeting. AWOP is a voluntary program designed to help surface water treatment plants perform at peak efficiency and exceed federal drinking water standards for health and safety. The optimization process helps drinking water systems to maximize public health protection against a broad range of health risks from waterborne contaminants.



ADEM’s Surface Water Meeting draws a crowd in Wetumpka

ADEM Hosts ‘Smoke School’ in Montgomery



ADEM hosts two “Smoke School” sessions each year

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management is committed to ensuring clean and healthy air for all Alabamians. To support this goal, ADEM’s Air Division conducts field training classes to equip personnel with the skills necessary to accurately record and report visible emissions. This proactive training ensures that regulated facilities remain compliant with applicable state and federal laws.

ADEM’s Visible Emissions Certification Program, or “Smoke School,” trains regulatory personnel, consultants, and the regulated community on the proper methods to identify, grade, and record visible emissions. ADEM hosts this certification program twice annually, typically in April and October. This training certifies participants on EPA-approved visible emissions methods, and features a 2-hour online lecture followed by an exam and a two-day in person field training.

Certification for the lecture component is valid for three years, while the field certification is valid for six months.

To simulate visible emissions for training, ADEM uses a specialized smoke generator which can reliably create both light and dark smoke plumes at varying opacities for the participants to record and grade.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Visible Emissions Field Manual, which is used as a reference during the training, is available for download on the ADEM website. This manual includes information on different methods used to record emissions, a checklist of equipment needed, and how to conduct an effective field survey.

ADEM UPDATE Available Online

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management publishes the *ADEM UPDATE* quarterly to inform Alabamians on the latest news and activities of the Department. As a cost-savings measure, the *ADEM UPDATE* is not printed. It is distributed electronically and available online through the publications link on the ADEM website at adem.alabama.gov. The ADEM website also has links to videos related to the Department's programs, public hearings, and recent events of interest.



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