

ADEM UPDATE

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Huge Recycling Event Held in Pelham

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management is continuing to achieve statewide waste reduction and recycling goals.

ADEM recently awarded more than \$7 million in recycling grants to cities, counties, and community organizations to start or benefit existing recycling programs. ADEM's grants will help pay for processing and collection equipment, educational materials, and other needs for recycling programs. The funds will benefit individuals, households, and communities statewide.



ADEM handed out 64 checks in August for recycling programs statewide

ADEM presented checks at Alabama Recycling Coalition Conference & Expo that took place from August 23-25 at the Pelham Civic Complex. The check presentations were the highlight of the three-day event.

ADEM Director Lance LeFleur handed out the checks with several ADEM staff members and media representatives on hand to capture the importance of the event.

"This isn't the first time we've done this," said LeFleur. "Since 2008, we have awarded more than 250 grants totaling in excess of \$30 million to enhance recycling programs across the state. The funds have made a real impact. The recycling programs have contributed to each community with real and tangible dividends."

The conference featured multiple speakers and exhibits, and helped increase awareness of the importance of recycling. The event included networking sessions, grant writing panel discussions, and regulatory updates.

ADEM Helps Schools Systems Reduce Emissions



DERA grants are funding the replacement of old buses

ADEM is partnering with five school systems to reduce diesel emissions through school bus replacement projects. The projects are utilizing funding under the federal Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA).

While new school buses must meet tougher emission standards from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, many older school buses continue to emit harmful diesel exhaust. This exhaust from older buses has a negative impact on human health, especially for children, who have a faster breathing rate than adults and whose lungs are not yet fully developed.

ADEM - using its DERA funding - has recently awarded funding to the Boaz City School System, the Lauderdale County Board of Education, the Winston

County Board of Education, the Wilcox County Board of Education, and the Mobile County Board of Education to assist in the purchase of new, cleaner school buses to replace some of their older buses.

Mobile Field Office in Final Stages of Construction

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management is getting close to opening a new field office in Mobile. The state-of-the-art facility is in the final stages of construction just off I-10, near the Mobile International Airport. The building faces South Broad Street near Duval St.

The front of the building has a unique, curved front wall that gives it an innovative and modern architectural appearance. Design plans, proposals, and funding of the new field office have been ongoing for the last ten years.

“We’re at long last in the final weeks of construction,” ADEM Director Lance LeFleur told the Alabama Environmental Management Commission at its August 11 meeting.

In his report, LeFleur reviewed photographs of the construction including a separate garage, a retention pond, surrounding grounds, and parking areas. Work spaces in the interior along with laboratory facilities, offices, and a reception area are nearing completion, but the front, curved wall is the eye-catcher.

“The curvature of the front wall of the building is distinctive,” said LeFleur. “Just seeing the photos of it gives you an idea of how the shadows will change throughout the day, which is intended to reflect the dynamic nature of the atmospheric cycles.”



Front view: a curved wall gives the building a unique appearance



Back view: the 15,000 square foot facility is close to completion

Construction on the facility has been underway since a groundbreaking ceremony in April of 2022. The 15,000-square-foot building will allow more efficient environmental protection services in the biodiverse-rich coastal region, and complement the City of Mobile’s redevelopment efforts in the area. The facility will officially open for business in October and will accommodate approximately 30 ADEM employees who have worked for years in old, outdated buildings.

The new facility costs \$11 million. It was funded by an appropriation of \$7.9 million approved by the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council using settlement money from the 2010 BP oil spill, and an additional \$3 million approved by the Legislature.

Drinking Water Watch Offers Key Information

ADEM has the authority delegated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to carry out the provisions of the Safe Drinking Water Act. The Department exercises this authority through enforcement of state and federal regulations, construction and operating permits, robust monitoring, reporting, and inspections of public water systems. ADEM consistently provides technical assistance and information to drinking water systems and local governments through outreach, news releases, publications, and the ADEM website, which provides a link to Drinking Water Watch - a tool that lets people view data that ADEM maintains about specific water systems.

Drinking Water Watch is a database that drinking water operators and individuals can use to find information about public water systems. The resources on the DWW webpage illustrate how to find the most useful and commonly requested data. This information includes: populations served, treatment used, sampling results, violations, and water system facilities.

EPA Conducts Sampling Course at ADEM

More than 35 ADEM employees participated in an environmental sampling course conducted this summer by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The training sessions concentrated on multimedia field sampling for various projects, events, and oversight. The sampling course took place at the ADEM offices in Montgomery and was coordinated by EPA's Region 4 Laboratory Services & Applied Science Division.

The major topics of the training included field documentation, data management, media-specific sampling techniques, field measurement, decontamination, special protocols, and hands-on sampling exercises. It included a large question and answer component along with a comprehensive list of "do's and don'ts."

EPA's two-day course was designed to provide a framework to assist decision-makers in developing and implementing different approaches for sample collection. Instructors said it is important to integrate field sampling and monitoring along with quality assurance activities to develop better environmental programs. The training also provided a full range of testing of water, soil, sediment, and hazardous wastes to support decisions ADEM staff has to make on an everyday basis.



The EPA course will help ADEM staff implement sampling techniques

ADEM Funding County Cleanups



ADEM's new program will help cleanup along roadways

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management has launched a new program to help counties clean up trash and garbage from roadways.

The right of way grant program is available to all 67 counties and will enable each county to clean up roadside wastes, and be reimbursed by ADEM for the work.

ADEM has contacted every county and informed them of the funding, which is part of the Department's continuing efforts to clean up unauthorized dumps. After the work is completed, each county can submit requests for reimbursement within 30 days of project completion, and ADEM will issue reimbursements on a county-by-county basis for the projects that are approved in advance.

"This interagency cooperative agreement can be a win for the counties that participate because it will allow them to do cleanup work on their road rights of way that they otherwise would not have been able to do because of the costs," said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur.

"It is also a win for the people of Alabama, underscoring ADEM's commitment to safeguarding the state's environment."

The new program is similar to the Department's existing cleanup program for scrap tires. LeFleur said the two programs help ADEM strengthen relationships while also increasing environmental awareness.

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 no longer 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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