

2026 AIR SEMINAR

AGENDA



Air Compliance in Practice: From Regulatory Foundations to Permitting and Enforcement

A P R I L 1 6 , 2 0 2 6

8:00 AM - 4:30 PM | PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN HOTEL, SPRINGFIELD, IL

MORNING SESSION

Welcome	Kelly Thompson, Executive Director, IERG
State of the Illinois EPA	James Jennings, Acting Director, Illinois EPA
Air Quality, Standards, and Regulatory Updates	Rory Davis, Regulatory Development Unit Manager, Illinois EPA
Making Air Permitting Work Better – For Everyone	Ryan Hendrickson, CAAP Unit Manager, Illinois EPA
Source Monitoring	Kevin Mattison, Source Emissions Monitoring Unit Supervisor, Illinois EPA
Air Inspection Program	Vikash Bhakta, Field Operations Section Manager, Illinois EPA

L U N C H

AFTERNOON SESSION

The Illinois Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP)	Ross Cooper, SBEAP Program Manager, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
Current and Emerging Issues in Air Regulations and Compliance <i>Panel Discussion</i>	<i>Panelists:</i> Genevieve Damico, Air Permits Section Supervisor, U.S. EPA Region 5 Michael Liebert, Air Quality Manager, Burns & McDonnell Mike Zebell, Senior Program Manager Milwaukee Office, TRC
U.S. EPA Region 5 Air Updates	
Regulatory Updates	
Practical Compliance Tips	
Violation Notices and Enforcement <i>Panel Discussion</i>	<i>Panelists:</i> Andrew Armstrong, IEPA Chief Legal Counsel, Illinois EPA Melissa Brown, Partner, HeplerBroom Christina Briggs, IL AGO Environmental Deputy Bureau Chief- Springfield, Illinois Attorney General Office
Closing Remarks	Kelly Thompson, Executive Director, IERG

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James Jennings
Acting Director
Illinois EPA

James Jennings was appointed as the Acting Director of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency on September 13, 2024. Prior to the appointment, he served as Interim Director since July 16, 2024. He was also named Deputy Director of the Illinois EPA in April 2023. As Deputy Director, James was responsible for the day-to-day oversight of issues that have an intersecting impact on the Illinois EPA's Bureaus of Air, Land, and Water, as well as the Division of Laboratories. James was Assistant Legal Counsel to the Illinois EPA's Bureau of Land for three years. James is Chair of the Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials' (ASTSWMO) Materials Management Subcommittee. James obtained his law degree from the University of Kentucky and his undergraduate degree from the University of Cincinnati.



Rory Davis
Regulatory Development
Unit Manager
Illinois EPA

Rory Davis has been involved in regulatory development at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency since 2005 and currently serves as Manager of the Regulatory Development Unit within the Bureau of Air's Air Quality Planning Section. In this role, he provides technical support for air regulatory proposals and contributes to the development and implementation of air quality regulations. Rory holds a Bachelor of Science in Computational Physics and a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Illinois State University, as well as a Master's degree in Engineering from the University of Illinois at Chicago. His graduate studies were completed through an interdisciplinary program with coursework in chemical and mechanical engineering, with a concentration in environmental engineering.



Ryan Hendrickson
CAAPP Unit Manager
Illinois EPA

Ryan Hendrickson is a Senior Public Service Administrator with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, where he manages the Clean Air Act Permit Program (CAAPP) Unit and supports permitting efforts across Illinois. With over nine years of CAAPP permitting experience, he specializes in environmental regulations and the Title V permitting process in Illinois. Ryan emphasizes efficiency and effectiveness in workflow management and is a strong advocate for collaboration – both within the Illinois EPA and with external stakeholders. His approach fosters consistency and continuous improvement in regulatory processes. Ryan holds a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. He looks forward to sharing insights on air permitting and engaging with industry to support best practices.

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Kevin Mattison

EPS IV, Source Emissions
Monitoring Unit
Illinois EPA

Kevin Mattison is a 1992 graduate of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a Bachelor of Science in Ceramic Engineering, he has dedicated his career to air quality management and regulatory compliance. Since 1993, he has been employed by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency within the Illinois EPA Bureau of Air. Kevin Mattison currently serves as Supervisor of the Source Emissions Monitoring Unit, where he manages and coordinates air pollution emission testing activities and continuous emission monitoring system (CEMS) certifications. His responsibilities include protocol development and review, witnessing stack tests, evaluating final reports, and overseeing source monitoring personnel. In addition, he provides technical guidance and expertise to the Bureau of Air on complex regulatory and engineering matters. In addition, he leads Illinois' "Smoke School" program, training agency staff, consultants, and industry personnel in US EPA Method 9 Visible Determination of Opacity of Emissions from Stationary Sources.



Vikash Bhakta

Field Operations Section
Manager
Illinois EPA

Vikash Bhakta serves as Field Operations Section Manager for the Bureau of Air at the Illinois EPA, directing statewide field inspection and compliance operations. He brings more than 13 years of experience in air program regulation, inspection, and management. Vikash provides technical leadership to teams responsible for ensuring regulatory compliance and operational effectiveness across Illinois. He is recognized for strengthening field operations through strategic planning, process improvement, and workforce development. His leadership has advanced consistency, efficiency, and accountability in air compliance programs. Vikash holds a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.



Ross Cooper

Small Business Environmental
Assistance Program Manager
DCEO

Ross Cooper is the Manager of the Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP) at the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), where he works directly with small businesses to help them understand and navigate air permitting and compliance requirements. Prior to working for DCEO, Ross had spent over 20 years in the Bureau of Air as an air permit writer and later served as CAAPP Unit Manager at the IL EPA. His extensive agency experience provides practical insight into air permitting processes, regulatory expectations, and compliance considerations. His work at SBEAP centers on helping businesses navigate air permitting, from emissions calculations to permits and regulatory requirements.



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Genevieve has headed the Air Permits Section in Region 5 since October 2011. The group is tasked with oversight of the Region's new source review, Title V operating permit, and federally enforceable operating permit programs and direct permitting actions on Tribal lands. Genevieve received a Chemical Engineering degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1992. After which she has worked as an Environmental Engineer for the Air Permits Section with the Environmental Protection Agency.

Genevieve Damico,
Supervisor Air Permits Section
USEPA Region 5



Mike is an environmental professional with 25+ years of expertise in air quality permitting, compliance, and regulatory strategy. He provides strategic support to industrial clients and trade associations, evaluating impacts of air quality rules across sectors including power, chemicals, aerospace, steel, LNG, fertilizer, automotive, and oil & gas. He specializes in Title V, NSR (PSD/NNSR), minor source permitting, MACT/NSPS compliance, emission inventories, audits, and TRI reporting. In his spare time, Mike likes to golf and try out new restaurants around the St. Louis area. Mike lives in Chesterfield, MO with his wife Kim and twins Davis and Alexandra, both 10.

Mike Liebert,
Air Quality Manager
Burns & McDonnell



Mike Zebell is a Senior Program Manager with TRC's Milwaukee, Wisconsin Office. Mr. Zebell is a licensed Professional Engineer in Wisconsin and has over 35 years of experience in environmental engineering and regulatory affairs. He serves as the primary client contact on projects that focus on multi-disciplinary permitting, air pollution control, and other environmental issues. Mike has directed the site identification, selection, evaluation, and permitting processes for electric power generation, combined heat and power plants, and other major industrial facilities throughout the United States. In addition, he has directed feasibility studies for development of biomass to energy projects including fuel studies, siting studies, through environmental permitting. He works with attorneys and senior management to address complex compliance and permitting issues for the agricultural processing, pharmaceutical, chemical, mineral processing, paper, printing and coating, and other heavy manufacturing facilities. Mr. Zebell has participated in or led hundreds of compliance audits over his career mainly serving in an air quality compliance role. Facilities audited include heavy to light manufacturing, food processing, energy generation, and rail yards. Mike has direct experience with Environmental Justice (EJ) issues, mainly with the recent implementation of Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's EJ policy for clients in Chicagoland, Peoria, and East St. Louis areas.

Mike Zebell,
Senior Program Manager
TRC

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Andrew Armstrong,
Chief Legal Counsel,
Illinois EPA

Andrew Armstrong serves as Chief Legal Counsel for the Illinois EPA. Prior to joining the Illinois EPA, Andrew served as Chief of the Illinois Attorney General's Springfield Environmental Bureau, where he supervised environmental enforcement and regulatory litigation on behalf of the State of Illinois. He earlier served as an Assistant Attorney General in the Illinois Attorney General's Chicago Environmental Bureau and an attorney for the not-for-profit Environmental Law and Policy Center in Chicago. Andrew graduated from the Northwestern University School of Law and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



Melissa Brown,
Partner, Heplerbroom

Melissa Brown, Partner, HeplerBroom, has developed a robust environmental law practice in which she assists businesses on a wide variety of environmental issues. Clients regularly rely on Melissa to provide counsel regarding compliance with federal and Illinois environmental statutes, regulations, and permitting. Melissa practices in HeplerBroom's Springfield, Illinois office. Melissa is a graduate of DePaul University College of Law (2014) and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2010, B.A., Political Science). <https://www.heplerbroom.com/professionals/brown-melissa>



Christina Briggs,
Deputy Bureau Chief, Illinois
Attorney General's
Environmental Bureau
Springfield

Christina Briggs serves as Deputy Bureau Chief of the Illinois Attorney General's Environmental Bureau in Springfield. She assists Bureau Chief Rachel Medina and supervises a staff of attorneys in matters of environmental and regulatory enforcement and litigation on behalf of the State of Illinois for matters in Central and Southern Illinois. She began her career with the Bureau in 2018 as an Assistant Attorney General. Tina graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School and the University of Illinois.



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Melissa Brown
Partner



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Joe Zlogar
Senior Principal



Civil & Environmental
Consultants, Inc.

Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc., (CEC) is a trusted environmental partner with deep regulatory credibility, built on long-standing business relationships with the Chicago Department of Public Health, the Illinois EPA, and U.S. EPA Region 5. We deliver end-to-end air permitting and compliance solutions tailored to Illinois facilities, including CAAPP, FESOP, and LTO permits, ROSS registrations, Annual Emissions Reports, and Air Quality Impact Evaluations. We go beyond permitting—we provide strategic regulatory applicability assessments, seamless permit-driven reporting, on-site compliance support, and proactive change management. CEC also brings proven experience supporting public meetings and community outreach efforts, including sensitive multi-stakeholder interactions within Environmental Justice communities. Covering market sectors from power and data centers to heavy industry (steel, refining, and petrochemicals) and renewable/clean energy, CEC merges local regulatory expertise with a nationwide bench of technical specialists. At CEC, We Own It - reflecting our employee-owned commitment to accountability, partnership, and your success. As an employee-owned firm, we understand what's at stake—your success is personal, and your outcomes matter to us. <https://www.cecinc.com/>



Rita Buechter
Environmental Group Manager

At BHMGM, we will be your eyes and ears to stay up to date on these regulations and help your company through permitting and reporting requirements. Our team's goal is to build long-term partnerships with our clients to ensure that we will provide support and guidance and be well prepared for any challenges that may arise. For over 50 years, BHMGM has been a leading provider of engineering and consulting services, and we are proud to offer a wide array of environmental services. Learn more about us at <https://bhmg.com/>



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Mike Zebell
Senior Program Manager



For more than 55 years, TRC has delivered agility, fortitude, and peace-of-mind to public and private enterprises actively confronting changing landscapes. Our tested practitioners resolve your toughest challenges through an integrated approach that combines advisory, consulting, construction, engineering and management services for any built or natural imperative. Incorporated in Connecticut in 1969, TRC has spent half a century combining evidenced-based thinking with creative engineering and consulting solutions for a continually shifting world. From humble beginnings as The Research Corporation of New England, a meteorological and air quality analysis firm, TRC quickly expanded into the power and infrastructure markets and is now a global leader helping clients adapt to transformations, big and small. Learn more about us at <https://www.trccompanies.com>.



Bryan Higgins
Managing Consultant



Trinity Consultants helps industrial facilities across Illinois navigate complex air quality regulations with confidence. Our team provides practical compliance solutions ranging from air permitting and dispersion modeling to emissions testing oversight, recordkeeping, and regulatory reporting. With deep expertise in Illinois EPA requirements—including CAAPP permits, ROSS registration, Annual Emissions Reports, and compliance management systems—Trinity ensures facilities maintain compliance while supporting operational flexibility and efficiency. Whether you need strategic guidance, technical analysis, or training for your team, Trinity delivers trusted local expertise backed by national resources. Learn more about us at <https://www.trinityconsultants.com>.



Mike Liebert
Air Quality Manager



Burns & McDonnell has offices in Chicago and St. Louis to support your Illinois air permitting and compliance needs. True partnerships lead to successful projects. At Burns & McDonnell, we dedicate experienced and innovative leaders to your work, beyond the specific needs of a particular job and always with safety in mind. We build long-term relationships as our people — engineers, architects, construction professionals, scientists and more — become valued extensions of your own teams, often for decades at a time. It's a point of pride that our clients find it difficult to tell the difference between a Burns & McDonnell employee and one of their own. And that's no surprise, considering that we, as employee owners, carry the commitment of ownership: We succeed when you do. Learn more at www.burnsmcd.com.

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Kevin Desharnais
Practice Group Chair of the
Environmental, Energy &
Sustainability Practice



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Chris Coulter
President
Coulter Consultion Company

Coulter Consulting Company, LLC, provides environmental consulting services to manufacturing and chemical processing facilities that are pursuing new or changes to existing air, water or land permits with the USEPA or IEPA. For more information, please contact Chris Coulter at ccoulter3339@gmail.com or on his cell at (309) 657-3375.

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