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**Department of Environmental Quality**  
**Administrative Overview**  
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**Introduction**

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC), DEQ's policy and rule-making board, are responsible for protecting and enhancing Oregon's water and air quality, for cleaning up spills and releases of hazardous materials, for managing the proper disposal of hazardous and solid wastes, and for enforcing Oregon's environmental laws.

The Environmental Quality Commission, a five member citizen commission whose members are appointed to four year terms by the Governor and subject to State Senate confirmation, adopts administrative rules, issues orders and judges appeals of fines or other department actions, and hires the DEQ director. DEQ also relies on advisory committees of citizens and government officials for assistance on environmental questions, and to help guide its decision-making. DEQ has the authority to issue fines for violation of pollution laws and standards. DEQ staff use a combination of technical assistance, inspections and permitting to help public and private facilities and citizens understand and comply with state and federal environmental regulations.

DEQ's programs are dictated by state and federal law, and in most instances, they are the result of specific federal and state legislation. In addition to local programs, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) delegates authority to DEQ to operate federal environmental programs within the state under the federal Clean Air Act (CAA), Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), Clean Water Act (CWA), Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), and Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The other federal agencies DEQ frequently collaborates with include, but are not limited to, the U.S. Forest Service, Department of the Interior, and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The state agencies DEQ frequently collaborates with include, but are not limited to, the Department of Agriculture, Department of Forestry, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Water Resources Department.

**History**

The first Oregon pollution laws were passed in 1889. They included promoting drainage for agriculture and sanitary purposes (General Laws of Oregon 1889, p. 25) and prohibiting dead animal carcasses and other decayed substances from being dumped in springs, brooks and creeks

decommissioning of oil tanks and cleanup of any resulting soil contamination from leaking tanks (O.L. 1999, Ch. 979).

In 2001, a number of DEQ fees, permits, and requirements were created to mitigate and clean up oil spills from vessels, facilities, and underground storage tanks (O.L. 2001, Ch. 688, 754).

In 2003, the Legislative Assembly established the Hazardous Waste Technical Assistance Fund (O.L. 2003, Ch. 654), and established the Willamette River Cleanup Authority (O.L. 2003, Ch. 696).

In 2007, the Legislative Assembly established Oregon E-Cycles (formerly known as Oregon's Electronics Recycling Program, or "E-Waste"), promoting responsible recycling of computers, monitors and televisions, to be financed by the products' manufacturers (O.L. 2007, Ch. 302).

## **Current Organization**

### Environmental Quality Commission (EQC)

The Environmental Quality Commission (EQC), DEQ's policy and rule-making board, is responsible for protecting and enhancing Oregon's water and air quality, and for managing the proper disposal and cleanup of solid and hazardous wastes.

### Office of the Director

The Office of the Director provides leadership to the agency in: policy formation and guidance, fiscal management, intra-agency and inter-agency coordination, enforcement, and accountability for the agency's efforts. The Director's Office manages the Office of Compliance and Enforcement, which enforces Oregon's environmental laws.

### Management Services Division

The Management Services Division provides central management services including budget and accounting, information and business systems, communications and outreach, intergovernmental coordination, human resource services, and health and safety services.

### Air Quality Division

The Air Quality Division monitors the air quality across Oregon to ensure that Oregonians are breathing air that meets or beats national air quality standards. The division measures the amount of toxic compounds in the air to understand their health impacts, then develops and implements strategies to reduce and prevent pollution from industrial, commercial, motor vehicle, and household sources. The major types of air pollution are Point Sources (emissions of large volumes of pollutants from a single source), and Area Sources (small individual sources of pollution, spread over a geographic area, that collectively contribute significant emission levels). The vehicle inspection program in the Portland area and in the Rogue Valley reduces pollution from motor vehicles, one of the primary sources of air pollution in Oregon.

More recently, attention has been shifting to "people-caused" pollution. DEQ also undertakes outreach efforts to minimize pollution, in addition to operating the mandatory motor vehicle emissions testing program, backyard burning restriction program, and woodstove burning curtailment program.