



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT ENVIROMATTERS

September 9, 2010

MDEStat Gets Results

The work week at MDE has barely started when the most important meeting of the week begins. On this day, the tough questions are about the work of MDE's Air and Radiation Administration.

Can we meet our deadline to retrofit diesel engines for a fleet of school buses? Why is enforcement action delayed on two recent Air and Radiation Administration violations?

This is the routine, every Monday morning at the Maryland Department of the Environment, though on another day the questions might center on the number of large animal farms inspected or wetlands permits issued, or other department responsibilities. The meetings are a key element of [MDEStat](#), our award-winning, data-driven program that helps make the Department of the Environment more streamlined and effective.

How much more effective? Since MDEStat's launch in 2007, MDE has steadily worked toward eliminating the wetlands permitting backlog by this October -- reducing a backlog from 5,700 permit applications to around 100 today. MDE has also eliminated the number of enforcement actions not referred in accordance with a standard operating procedure. Fair and timely enforcement is essential to creating a level playing field for the vast majority of entities that are in compliance. MDEStat also reduced permitting backlogs, improved human resource practices including hiring, and increased efficient use of funding. MDEStat also makes MDE operations more transparent. [Summaries](#) of the statistics discussed during the meetings are placed on MDE's website.

MDEStat was inspired by CitiStat, the initiative pioneered by Governor Martin O'Malley when he was Mayor of Baltimore. It is a new way of doing business at MDE. It is our primary management and accountability process. It provides intensive, systematic, numbers-based oversight of MDE's operations -- allowing us to identify needs, set priorities, and make the best use of resources. Any business wants to run a tighter ship. MDEStat helps us to do that.

The program received the [2009 State Program Innovation Award](#) from the Environmental Council of the States, an organization of state environmental regulatory agencies. It is also under consideration for an award from the Council of State Governments. Sue Battle-McDonald, a graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, leads the program with the appropriate intensity given the enormous responsibility placed in a government regulatory agency. She pores over spreadsheets and monthly reports, approaching them like gold mines full of valuable nuggets of information. "You have to get it right," she says, "and the numbers tell the story."

She then presides over the weekly MDEStat meeting. Other senior MDE staff -- including MDE's Budget Director, Principal Counsel, Senior Policy Advisor, Deputy Secretary, myself and others -- participate in the panel that reviews performance data. MDEStat's follow up is continuous. Every meeting provides opportunities for enhanced performance, priorities to address and issues that need attention.

MDEStat results include:

- Identifying the need to inspect more demolition sites to ensure proper handling of

- asbestos -- and increasing the number of sites inspected by 25 percent in a year.
- Reducing the backlog of wetlands permits applications from more than 5,700 a year ago to about 100 today.
 - Ensuring that a new program for permitting and inspecting farms to prevent water pollution met its inspection target for Fiscal Year 2010.
 - Increasing the number of septic system upgrades from 95 as of December 2007 to more than 2,000.
 - Promoting discussions of needed resources and process changes -- leading, for example, to an investment in software changes to help inspectors be more productive.
 - Reducing the average time to fill a personnel vacancy.
 - Tracking more than 80 [environmental projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#) -- and ensuring that they were under construction by the end of last year.
 - Eliminating a Department backlog of more than 500 overdue enforcement actions, even as the number of enforcement actions increased by 54 percent from 2007 to 2010, as will be detailed in MDE's annual enforcement report to be released this fall. (Many of these cases, which have a three-year statute of limitations, are pending action by the Office of the Attorney General.)

At the recent MDEStat meeting on Air and Radiation Administration activities, MDE's managers had good answers. The deadline for retrofitting the buses is expected to be met, because work has started and completion schedules are in place.

And those two Air and Radiation Administration violations? They're on their way to being resolved -- meaning that, department-wide, the backlog of enforcement actions has been eliminated.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shari T. Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Martin O'Malley, Governor | Anoth y G.Brown. Lt. Governor | Shari Wilson, Secretary



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