

DEQ Customer Service Survey

As Director of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), I have heard the complaint that the DEQ and Michigan's business community have an antagonistic relationship, but have never seen any further detail or insight to back up this claim. In fact, I've always believed that the opposite was true, that Michigan's business community and the DEQ have a respectful and largely positive relationship that seeks to rebuild our economy while also protecting and preserving our environment.

To test whether that perception is true, the DEQ contacted Michigan State University and asked them to conduct a scientifically valid analysis of customer satisfaction with various DEQ permit programs. In order to facilitate this, the MSU researchers prepared a survey that was sent out in January 2009 to a randomly selected group of 1,850 permit applicants who had gone through the DEQ permit application process in at least one of 16 major permitting areas.



The survey elicited background information from each respondent and asked, among other questions, if they were satisfied with the overall permitting experience, the professionalism of DEQ staff, and if their permit application was processed in a timely manner, certainly all important aspects of having a successful relationship that fosters trust between the business and environmental community.

The MSU research team recently submitted the results from their survey which concludes that there is "a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the permitting process." The results showed that 74% of all respondents agreed that they were satisfied with their interactions with the DEQ, with only 14% expressing any level of dissatisfaction with the process or the timeliness of our decisions. Even better, only 5% felt that DEQ staff were anything but professional and courteous during their interaction.

The research team stated in their final report that "one area of competence and strength was the overall satisfaction with the DEQ staff. Across all permit areas, there was strong satisfaction with the quality, professional courtesousness of the staff."

When those results are broken down into specific DEQ programs, the results are even more impressive. Several DEQ programs earned 100% satisfaction ratings from respondents, and even some of the most contentious areas of regulation that the DEQ administers earned high praise.

While I am extremely proud of these results and of the DEQ staff that earned those high marks, we will certainly not rest on those laurels. The report did outline several areas that our department could focus on for improvement, and we have already begun efforts to do exactly that.



environmental spotlight

While all government agencies are facing difficult decisions with shrinking budgets, it doesn't mean that we can't also identify ways to improve our level of service to the public. The DEQ has taken that to heart under the administration of Governor Jennifer Granholm and created some of the most effective and efficient permitting programs in the nation, expanded outreach and education efforts to better assist the public and regulated community in understanding the issues our environment faces, and lived up to our responsibility to protect and preserve Michigan's environment and public health.

It's time we put to rest the old ideas that environmental regulations stand in the way of economic growth. Instead we must now focus our efforts on finding those common paths where our agency can work together with the public and Michigan's business community in bringing new development, and new types of development, to our state. Together, these efforts will bring the jobs that Michigan workers are looking for, while keeping our environment safe and protected for the generations of Michigan's workforce yet to come.

If you'd like to review the final report prepared by Michigan State University, please click [here](#).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. E. Chester".

Steven E. Chester
Director
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality