



2025 scorecard

Streamlining Minnesota's environmental permitting

Tracking progress on efforts to reduce timelines, address backlogs and improve transparency in Minnesota's environmental permitting and review programs.

The Minnesota Chamber Foundation's 2024 report, *Streamlining Minnesota's environmental permitting process: Essential for economic growth*, examined the efficiency and transparency of Minnesota's environmental permitting system by outlining and then comparing timelines and processes to other states, and providing recommendations for streamlining and improvements.

In the year since that report's release, permitting activity has experienced partial improvement, but continues to experience significant challenges.

Improvements ↑

- ✓ While only one priority Tier 2 air permit was issued within the agency's 150-day goal, a plurality (17 of 35) of them were issued between 150 and 365 days of the initial application, meaning that the typical priority permit took more than 150 days but less than a year to issue.
- ✓ Federal individual air permits were issued in an average of 266 days in 2024. While this only reflects a small sample size (three permits), it signals progress in getting closer to the agency's 150-day goal. This matters because federal individual air permits often relate to larger economic development projects.
- ✓ Backlogs of non-priority air and water permits saw modest improvements in 2024.
- ✓ Several steps were taken to improve transparency and certainty for applicants, including enhancements to Minnesota's Business First Stop program, legislation passed to provide coordinated schedules to project proposers, new permitting dashboards from the MPCA, and proposed funds for a permitting ombudsman in the governor's budget proposal.

Continued challenges ↓

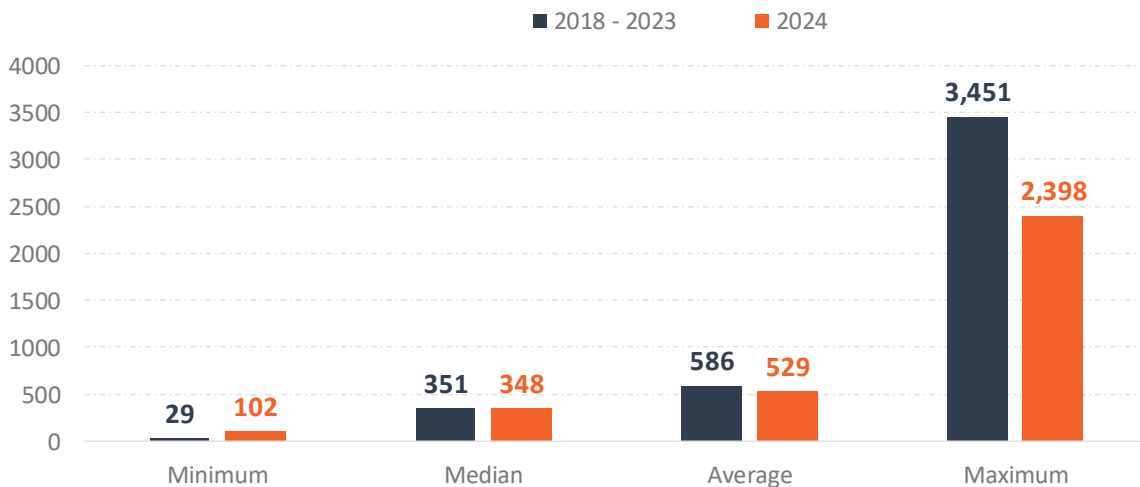
- ⌋ The median timeline to issue priority Tier 2 air permits remained nearly unchanged at 348 days in 2024. Only one of 35 priority Tier 2 air permits were issued within 150 days.
- ⌋ Only two priority individual industrial NPDES water permit applications were received in fiscal year 2024. These two, along with two others received in previous years, have yet to be issued and have been pending for an average of 829 days.
- ⌋ Despite modest improvements, non-priority Tier 2 air and water permits continue to face substantial backlogs. For example, there are 441 air permits currently in process or awaiting assignment to agency staff (as of February 2025). These permits have been in the queue for a median of 1,270 days. Among these 441 permits, 326 (74%) remain unassigned, with over half (54%) having been awaiting assignment for over three years.
- ⌋ There continues to be a lack of accessible data on environmental review projects, limiting the ability for stakeholders to monitor efficiency and identify opportunities in the process for improvement.
- ⌋ New initiatives imposed last year, such as mandatory use of standardized emissions spreadsheets and air modeling requirements, add complexity and uncertainty to Minnesota's already-robust permitting requirements.



348 median number of days to issue priority Tier 2 air permits
1 of 35 priority Tier 2 air permits issued within 150-day goal
18 of 35 priority Tier 2 air permits issued within 1 year
2 new priority individual industrial NPDES water permits received; both remain pending
63% of individual industrial NPDES water permits are administratively continued
441 air permits awaiting assignment or in process, with a median of 1,270 days since applications were received by the MPCA

Median timeline to issue priority Tier 2 air permits in 2024 nearly matched the median from the previous 5-year period

Number of days to issue priority Tier 2 air permits



Air permit status:
permit applications
that have been
received but not
yet issued
(as of February 2025)

441 total air permit applications in process or awaiting assignment

- **326** applications still awaiting assignment
- **115** applications in process

1,270 median number of days since applications were received by the MPCA

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