



2026
SEPTEMBER

LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL
QUALITY
NEWSLETTER

2016 FLOOD

10 YEARS LATER

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2026 Regular Legislative Session Brings Change to LDEQ Programs and Responsibilities

Every legislative session brings about changes that state agencies must translate from statutory language into the practical work of serving Louisiana. For the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), the 2026 Regular Legislative Session resulted in four enacted measures affecting the Department's programs, processes and responsibilities — touching everything from permitting fees and environmental cleanup funding to lead hazard assessments in child care facilities.

While each piece of legislation addresses distinct areas of LDEQ's work, a common thread runs through all the measures: ensuring the Department has the appropriate tools, procedures and authority to carry out its responsibilities effectively as Louisiana's environmental needs continue to evolve.

"LDEQ's work does not end when legislation is enacted; that is when the important work of implementation begins," LDEQ Secretary Courtney J. Burdette said. "Our responsibility is to understand these changes, put them into practice thoughtfully and ensure that our programs continue to serve Louisiana effectively. I am proud of the expertise and dedication our employees bring to achieve that objective every day."



Courtney J. Burdette
Secretary, LDEQ

Among the most significant changes resulting from this session is **Act 85**, introduced as House Bill 758, which provides LDEQ with greater flexibility to establish and restructure certain permitting and regulatory fees through the public rulemaking process. Rather than establishing specific future fees directly in statute, the legislation provides a framework for the Department to reassess how certain fees are calculated and assessed, while establishing statutory caps that allow future adjustments through rulemaking.

Act 85 also includes changes to the annual air criteria pollutant fee and provides a mechanism for future adjustments based on the Consumer Price Index. LDEQ intends to use the new authority to simplify fee calculations

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– LDEQ Secretary
Courtney J. Burdette



The **DISCOVER DEQ** newsletter is published quarterly each year by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. Current environmental news, permits, violations and other news items can be found on our website at <https://www.deq.louisiana.gov>. For your convenience, there are links to quarterly reports on the back page of this newsletter.

and assessments while supporting continued funding of delegated environmental programs.

Other legislation passed during the 2026 Regular Legislative Session is less focused on funding and more on how LDEQ conducts its day-to-day business.

Act 456 (introduced as Senate Bill 99) authorizes electronic communication and notification to LDEQ in certain situations where state law previously required paper notification. This change provides additional flexibility for regulated entities and the Department, while supporting ongoing efforts to modernize administrative processes and improve efficiencies.

Act 893, originally Senate Bill 274, addresses another important area of LDEQ's responsibilities by revising provisions related to lead hazard risk assessments associated with child care centers. The measure addresses previously existing administrative gaps and clarifies implementation requirements — helping to establish clearer regulatory responsibilities while supporting the continued administration of the Department's lead program and, ultimately, the protection of children and families.

The 2026 Regular Legislative Session also resulted in **Act 551**, introduced as House Bill 417, which revises statutory provisions governing Louisiana's Hazardous Waste Site Cleanup Fund. These changes update statutory authority related to cleanup funding and support the Department's ongoing administration of remediation activities associated with the program.

Taken together, these four measures represent a cross-section of the work that LDEQ staff perform every day — from managing regulatory programs and administering environmental cleanup resources to communicating with the

regulated community and helping protect some of Louisiana's most vulnerable residents.

"Each of these measures touches a different section of the Department, which means implementation requires coordination among staff with very different areas of expertise," LDEQ Deputy Secretary Nathan McBride said. "Our employees understand the technical, regulatory and operational details behind these programs — and that institutional knowledge is essential to making sure all legislative changes are implemented carefully and effectively."

LDEQ is currently reviewing the enacted legislation and determining the administrative, regulatory and operational changes necessary to comply with all new requirements. Where legislation requires rulemaking or additional public processes, the Department will continue to provide information to the public as those efforts move forward.

For LDEQ, the conclusion of the 2026 Regular Legislative Session represents not the conclusion of the work but rather the beginning of the next step: putting the Louisiana State Legislature's newly enacted laws into practice while upholding our broader mission to protect Louisiana's air, land and water in service to its citizens.

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– LDEQ Deputy Secretary
Nathan McBride

2026 REGULAR LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Legislation Affecting the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality



A summary of legislation enacted during the 2026 Regular Session that affects the Department's programs and responsibilities.



ACT 85
(HB 758)

Environmental Permitting Fees

Overview

Act 85 authorizes LDEQ to establish certain permitting and regulatory fees through the administrative rulemaking process rather than directly in statute.

The legislation also provides authority to restructure how certain fees are assessed and establishes statutory fee caps that allow future adjustments through rulemaking.

LDEQ Impact

- Future fee changes will occur through the public rulemaking process.
- The Department intends to simplify fee calculations and assessments.
- Supports continued funding of delegated environmental programs.



ACT 456
(SB 99)

Electronic Communication

Overview

Act 456 authorizes electronic communication and notification to LDEQ in certain situations where state law previously required paper notification.

LDEQ Impact

- Expands electronic communication options.
- Improves administrative efficiency.
- Supports modernization of Department processes.



ACT 893
(SB 274)

Lead Hazard Risk Assessment

Overview

Act 893 revises provisions related to lead hazard risk assessments associated with child care facilities.

The legislation addresses administrative gaps and clarifies implementation requirements.

LDEQ Impact

- Updates administration of the Department's lead program.
- Supports continued protection of children and families.
- Clarifies regulatory responsibilities.



ACT 551
(HB 417)

Hazardous Waste Cleanup Site Fund

Overview

Act 551 revises provisions governing Louisiana's Hazardous Waste Site Cleanup Fund.

LDEQ Impact

- Updates statutory authority related to cleanup funding.
- Supports ongoing administration of remediation activities.



Looking Ahead

LDEQ is currently reviewing each enacted measure and will implement any necessary administrative, regulatory, and operational changes as required by law.

For legislation requiring rulemaking or administrative implementation, additional public information will be provided as those processes move forward.



Changes Made in Lead Program to Protect Children

As of August 1, 2026, Louisiana now requires new daycares and early learning centers to complete a comprehensive lead risk assessment on their buildings and grounds and submit the results to the state as a mandatory part of getting a license to operate.

The law, as provided in Senate Bill 274 of the 2026 Session, requires new child care facilities and pre-kindergarten programs to complete a comprehensive lead hazard risk assessment, including paint, dust, and soil, before getting licensed to open. Assessment results must be attached directly to the facility's original state license application.

If lead hazards are found, LDEQ, the Louisiana Department of Health, and the Department of Education will coordinate a response, and the facility is legally prohibited from opening until proper lead abatement and control methods are fully implemented and verified.

The stricter regulations resulted from an investigative series by Fox 8 in New Orleans that aired in July 2025. The investigative report



uncovered a daycare in Algiers had opened without proper lead testing records due to gaps in historical pre-1978 building compliance.

A two-year-old child enrolled at the daycare suffered severe lead poisoning. Subsequent state inspections found dangerous levels of lead in the building and on the grounds, with no historical record of required lead paint clearances.

Although older laws technically required checking properties built before 1978, lead testing was not strictly enforced or verified as a mandatory, pre-licensing approval step by the state.



OCTOBER

Breast Cancer Awareness Month



Volunteers with flat-bottomed boats took to the streets of Livingston Parish to help with the evacuation process.

2016 FLOOD: 10 Years Later

The Flood of 2016 was a defining moment for South Louisiana, with an impact felt by so many in our state. FEMA, LDEQ, and EPA, among many agencies and organizations, worked to meet the needs of those who were affected, but it was the resilient spirit of the people in those communities that made the biggest difference. Neighbors, families and friends came together to provide resources, perform rescues, and find comfort in one another throughout the rebuilding process. The flood was devastating, but it was no match for the resolve and tenacity of Louisianans.

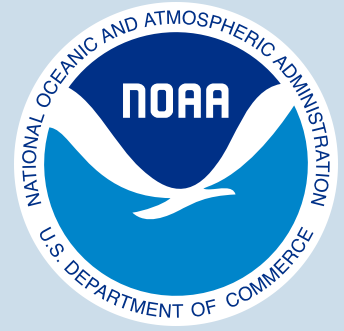
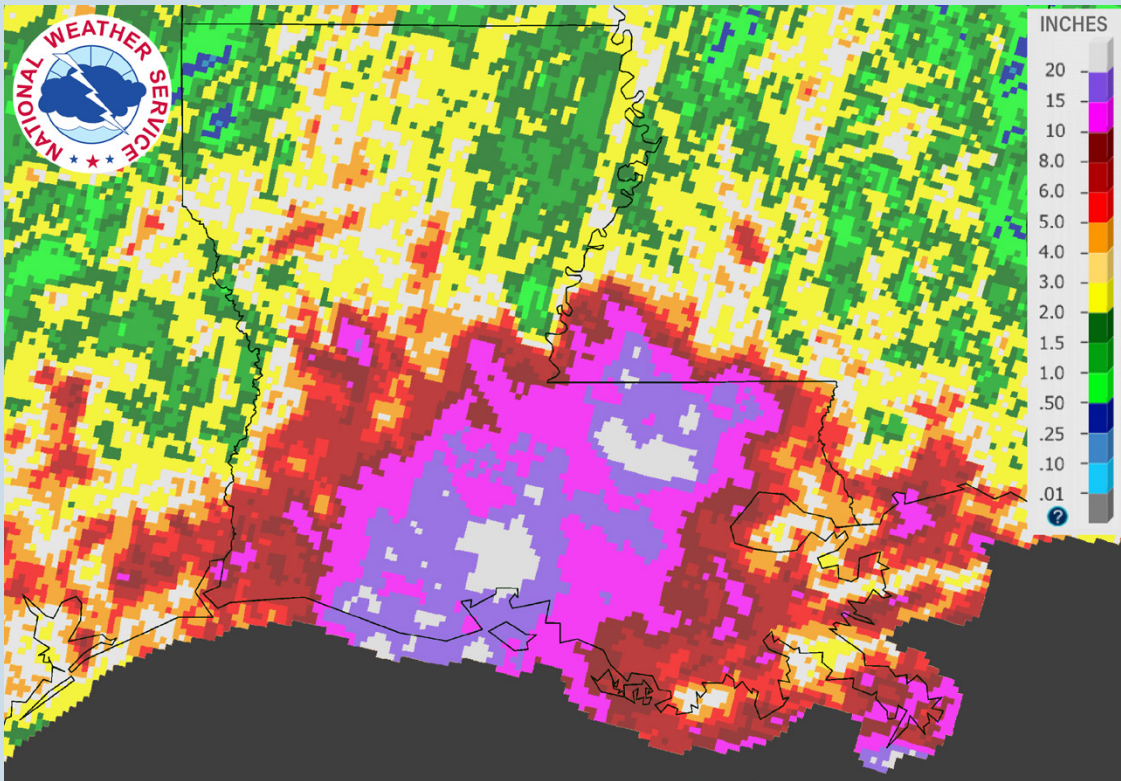
— LDEQ Secretary Courtney J. Burdette

The temperature didn't quite make it to 90 that Thursday, unusual for Baton Rouge in August. It was overcast all day, and a light rain set in just before 10:30 a.m. By afternoon, the daytime heating managed to push the temperature to 87, plenty hot enough to generate some storm energy and change light rain to strong showers and thunderstorms.

South Louisiana gets 60 inches of rain a year on average. People who live here are used to wet weather. But that summer day was the beginning of a three-day event that they had never seen the like of before.

The next day, Friday, Aug. 12, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Prediction Center described the heavy rain event as "an inland sheared tropical depression." The event was a very slow-moving low pressure system that combined with extreme tropical moisture, and the radar signature of the storm system looked very like a hurricane with the familiar counterclockwise rotation of clouds and rain.

By midday Friday, the steady, hard rain filled ditches, swelled rivers, flooded streets and forced closures.



AUGUST 16, 2016 7-Day Observed Precipitation

*Created on: August 16,
2016 – 14:09 UTC*

*Valid on: August 16,
2016 – 12:00 UTC*

According to the World Weather Attribution website, “The unnamed storm would eventually shower Louisiana with an estimated 7.1 trillion gallons of water — more rain than Hurricane Isaac in 2012, and three times as much rain as Hurricane Katrina in 2005.”

By the time the storm began to let up Saturday, Aug. 13, some areas in northern East Baton Rouge and Livingston parishes had experienced 55 consecutive hours of intense rainfall with some locations recording more than 30 inches of rain. Flooding was widespread across multiple parishes in southeast Louisiana

and counties in southwest Mississippi. The Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Planning reports that 26 of Louisiana’s 64 parishes received Federal disaster designations after the storm.

According to the National Weather Service (NWS), record flooding was observed in the Amite/Comite River Basin, Tickfaw River Basin, Natalbany River Basin and the Tangipahoa River Basin. The flooding led to closures on Interstates 10 and 12 for several days.

A report commissioned by the Louisiana Department of Economic Development

November 3 is Election Day.

According to the Louisiana Division of Administration State Holiday Calendar, **ELECTION DAY** is recognized as a legal state holiday in general election years, meaning state offices and agencies are closed.

and released in September assessed the flood's economic impact, finding that "over 109,000 housing units flooded in Louisiana." Additionally, "at least 13 deaths were reported across the state, and tens of thousands of residents were rescued or evacuated from their homes or sought refuge in shelters." Some 90,000 automobiles, the report found, were damaged by flood waters.

Almost instantly after the rain cleared, area residents began to clear their homes of flood damaged materials. Streets in subdivisions were walled in by high, long piles of debris along every curb: ruined furniture, appliances, clothes, electronics, carpet, tile, cardboard, gypsum wallboard, paper and many, many black plastic garbage bags. As the sun reappeared and heat built, a recognizable odor of mildew and mold hung in the sweltering air everywhere.

"The 2016 flood was a defining event for South Louisiana, and for many of us at LDEQ it was personal as well. I experienced flooding firsthand, which only strengthened my appreciation for the resilience of our communities and the importance of being prepared. Over the past decade, LDEQ has

continued to enhance our emergency response capabilities, strengthen partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies, and ensure our staff are ready to deploy whenever disaster strikes. Whether responding to floods, hurricanes, industrial incidents, or other emergencies, our mission remains the same: protect Louisiana's people and environment by providing timely, science-based environmental response and supporting the safe recovery of our communities," LDEQ Assistant Secretary for Environmental Compliance Jerry Lang said.

Following LDEQ guidance, people impacted by the flood separated the debris into six piles containing different kinds of waste: household trash, vegetative debris, construction and demolition debris, white goods, electronics and household hazardous waste. Each of these waste streams had a separate destination. It helped speed up the removal process, but the piles were slow to shrink. Complaints mounted. Something had to be done.

When residents were finally able clear their homes of water damaged goods and materials, debris were heaped high along streets in Baton Rouge and other areas hit by the Flood of 2016.





Landfills worked at a steady pace to try to stay ahead of the inflow of flood debris.

LDEQ decided to expand the definition of construction and demolition debris (C&D) to include carpet and furniture. That allowed the disposal of that storm generated waste stream in C&D landfills. It allowed the process to continue to be protective of the environment, yet it eased the pressure on the other types of landfills.

The piles dwindled, but the flow was still constricted. LDEQ authorized the opening of a number of staging areas where removal contractors temporarily stored debris before moving it to available landfills. This step expedited curbside removal. The piles began to disappear more quickly.

Still, it was a long road to normalcy. Many residents had to wait for an insurance settlement or FEMA reimbursement before they could even begin restoring their homes. Businesses were also struggling to reopen and some roads and streets were closed by flood damages.

Eventually the debris piles were gone. Area residents returned to work. But some houses were never repaired, and some businesses and stores were shuttered for good. It took years for all the scars to be erased. A decade later, only a few reminders remain. People who live here are used to wet weather. Those who were here in 2016 paid a price. They still look up with a hint of anxiety when the skies turn dark and rain begins to fall in torrents.

•HONORING ALL WHO SERVED•

Veterans Day

*Louisiana State Offices
will be closed on
Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2026, in
recognition of Veterans Day.*



Air Monitoring by LDEQ Contributing to Improved Conditions

LDEQ maintains a statewide monitoring network of stationary ambient air monitoring stations. From these sites, analysis personnel collect direct measurements of air pollutant concentrations then analyze and interpret the data. The data collected is used to track trends in air quality and determine compliance with National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

The air monitoring data sites may provide measurements of the ozone level, the concentration of fine particulate matter, such as smoke, dust, soot and aerosols, as well as the levels of sulfur dioxide gas in the air.

The public can view the data provided by these monitoring sites by visiting <https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/ambient-air-monitoring-program>.

“Over the past 30 years, LDEQ’s dual mandate under state law to protect health while encouraging full industrial employment has helped to lessen the levels of measured air pollutants in our atmosphere even as Louisiana’s economy has grown,” said Secretary Courtney J. Burdette.

“LDEQ will continue to support this positive trend through its statewide air monitoring efforts,” she said.



OZONE LEVEL

Ozone Level – tracks the concentration of ozone (O_3) gas in the air, primarily detecting harmful ground-level ozone for public health, safety, and environmental protection. This monitor often detects industrial leaks and assesses vegetation damage caused by pollutants.



FINE PARTICULATE MATTER

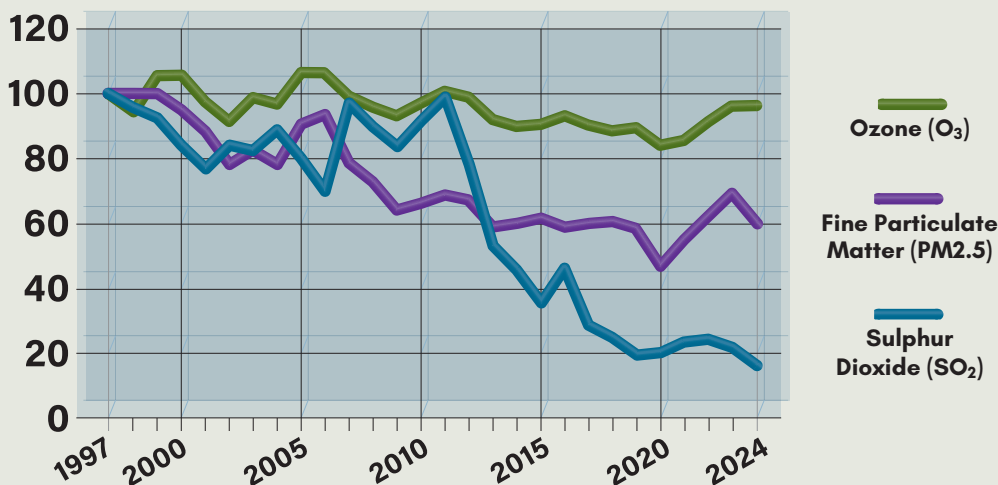
PM_{2.5} – measures the concentration of fine particulate matter, specifically particles 2.5 micrometers or smaller in diameter, such as smoke, dust, soot, and aerosols. This monitor assesses air quality to identify health risks from pollutants that penetrate deep into the lungs.



SULFUR DIOXIDE

SO₂ – measures the concentration of sulfur dioxide gas in the air, primarily to ensure safety in industrial workplaces and to monitor environmental pollution. This monitor can detect toxic levels of the pungent gas, protecting workers and public health from respiratory irritation.

DOWNWARD TREND IN MEASURED AIR POLLUTANTS



Over the past 30 years, LDEQ’s dual mandate under state law to protect health while encouraging full industrial employment has helped to shape a trajectory where criteria pollutants have dropped significantly even as Louisiana’s economy has grown. LDEQ will continue to support this positive trend through its statewide air monitoring efforts.

LDEQ Quarter Summaries

The LDEQ website, [DEQ.Louisiana.gov](https://www.deq.louisiana.gov), has lists of all enforcement actions, settlement agreements, air permits, water permits, and solid and hazardous waste permits.

Enforcement Actions



<https://deq.louisiana.gov/page/enforcement-actions>

Settlement Agreements



<https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/about-ldeq/settlement-agreements-2026>

Air Permits



<https://deq.louisiana.gov/page/permits-issued-by-calendar-quarter>

Water Permits

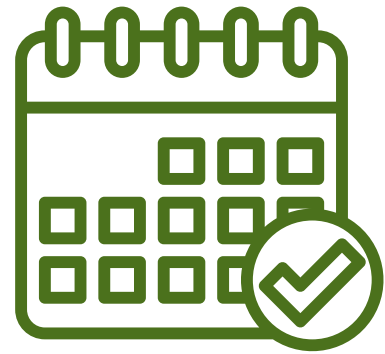


<https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/waste-permits-issued-by-calendar-quarter>

Solid and Hazardous Waste Permits



<https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/waste-permits-issued-by-calendar-quarter>



Important Dates

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Oct. 20 – 27: Early Voting

Tuesday, Nov. 3: Election Day

Wednesday, Nov. 11: Veterans Day

Thursday, Nov. 26: Thanksgiving

Friday, Dec. 25: Christmas Day

Friday, Jan. 1, 2027: New Year's Day

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