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LDEQ Secretary visits storm-ravaged Lake Charles

LDEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown and members of his executive staff flew into Lake Charles Sept. 2, five days after Hurricane Laura made landfall and devastated the city. The secretary wanted a first-hand view of damages to make a personal assessment of what lay ahead for the storm-ravaged region.

The LDEQ Southwest Regional Office (SWRO) is just at the elbow of Chenault Regional Airport, the only airport open in the area on the day Secretary Brown made his visit. SWRO is housed in a flat-topped building on Gadwall Street, and although the LDEQ sign was broken into pieces and the stop sign at the corner was leaning at a sharp angle to the ground, the building itself had very little damage.



LDEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown, left, LDEQ Environmental Scientist René Guilbeau, center, and Southwest Regional Office (SWRO) Manager Billy Eakin tour the SWRO offices.

LDEQ Regional Manager Billy Eakin showed the secretary around the facility and pointed out a couple of places where water had intruded into the building, causing minor damage. All the windows and doors at SWRO were intact. Just down the street at 1417 Gadwall, the Department of Child and Family Service's (DCFS) Child Support Enforcement facility was essentially scalped by the storm's winds. Only the roof beams remained as the metal roofing and plywood sheets underneath were stripped away, exposing interior spaces to wind and rain. What happened to DCFS's facility was more typical of damage to houses, buildings and other facilities around the city.

Transiting to the two sites where the agency's Mobile Air Monitoring Laboratories (MAMLs) were deployed, the secretary and his staff drove past tornado-like damage at SOWELA Technical Community College. Winds there had even knocked over a masonry wall. Tatters of pink insulation and stray bits of paper lodged in chain-link fences. Piles of lumber and construction materials, as well as limbs and tree trunks, accumulated as crews were already at work removing debris that would eventually make its way into landfills. Blue tarps were omnipresent on damaged roofs of homes, apartments and other buildings. Trees and utility lines were down everywhere, and the group encountered only two working traffic signals during their visit.

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Secretary Brown visited with MAML personnel who explained what compounds for which they are monitoring for and what equipment was in use on the massive trucks which carry the state-of-the-art sampling gear. Nearby, the secretary paid a visit to the BioLab facility where a chemical fire erupted the morning after Laura made landfall. Secretary Brown and his group met with plant officials and were given a post-fire cleanup report.

Despite the damage and disarray, work was already being done to clean up debris and restore power to the area. Utility crews were much in evidence, a welcome sight. Hurricane Laura knocked down Lake Charles, but the city was not knocked out. But it's a slow process.

Traffic is heavy all over the area as relief workers and recovery crews flood the area. It takes time to get from one place to another with so many traffic lights out, so much traffic, and so much debris in the streets. With patience, travelers can reach their destinations. That might be a good metaphor for the area as a whole: with patience, they will reach their destination – recovery.

“LDEQ will be here to ensure the debris removal is accomplished in an environmentally safe manner,” Brown said. “We are going to see that there is adequate landfill space to properly dispose of all the storm debris.”



The broken sign outside of the SWRO office frames LDEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown and LDEQ personnel.



LDEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown visits with MAML staff at one of the labs deployed in Lake Charles.



SWRO offices suffered little damage from Hurricane Laura.



Storm damage is apparent across the street from the SWRO offices.



LDEQ employees send support and resources to co-workers impacted by Hurricane Laura

“The only thing bigger than this collection of supplies is the generosity of the LDEQ employees who donated it. This pile of everything from paper towels to flat tire repair kits to soap to drinking water is destined to fill needs of hurricane-impacted LDEQ employees at the Southwest Regional Office in Lake Charles. LDEQ had employees whose homes were impacted by Hurricane Laura – one whose house was completely destroyed and many others whose dwellings are just unlivable for now.

Employees at headquarters in Baton Rouge mounted a drive to help their colleagues in Lake Charles, and this is the result waiting to be transported from the Galvez Building to Lake Charles Sept. 17, as well as a monetary donation of \$2,300.

This effort will continue with ongoing collections as long as there is a need. I could not be prouder of LDEQ employees -- those who are giving and those who are continuing to work through adversity.”

- LDEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown



LDEQ Secretary Chuck Carr Brown helps wrap-up the agency-wide supply drive for LDEQ employees in the Southwest Regional Office.



The LDEQ Solid Waste Division also made care baskets for impacted co-workers.



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Message from the Secretary

Chuck Carr Brown, Ph.D.

The great baseball player Satchel Paige said “Don’t look back. Something might be gaining on you.” That’s a funny and meaningful observation, but at the same time, you can’t map out where you are going unless you look at where you’ve been.

I was a guest on a three-person panel for a webcast sponsored by the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI) on Sept. 24 in Baton Rouge. The online seminar was called “The IMPACT”: Cabinet Corner. I was joined by Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) Secretary Tom Harris and Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LDOTD) Secretary Shawn Wilson.

We discussed our visions for the future of energy, infrastructure and the environment. The seminar was moderated by Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI) President and CEO Stephen Waguespack, who conveyed questions from online participants and offered some queries of his own.



I give opening remarks at the LABI-sponsored webinar “The IMPACT.”

Many of the questions were about the future, what might happen and how we might meet new challenges, but as I said, you have to be able to review where you’ve been to plot your future course. I offered updates on our current new technology – new MAMs, electric fleet, unmanned aircraft, new equipment, etc. But I also talked about developing technology – the importance of wind and solar generated electricity, the expansion of the electric charging station system, continuing development of alternative fuels corridors and even hydroelectric projects that take advantage of river current or tidal action. We have to be open to all possibilities as we move toward less dependence on hydrocarbon-based fuels.

That said, I will repeat, as I always do, it’s not going to happen overnight. We still need a bridge fuel to get us to the point where we can use mostly electric-powered vehicles. That bridge fuel, I believe, will be cleaner-burning natural gas, and Louisiana has a huge supply of it. As I said at the seminar, that puts Louisiana in a unique position. We can be the source for the bridge fuel.

That’s the look ahead. With apologies to Mr. Paige, I have to take a moment to look back.

I want to thank each and every employee of LDEQ for the outstanding effort you put forth over the past month in responding to Hurricane Laura, Hurricane Marco and Hurricane Sally. The last two had little effect on Louisiana even though we had to gear up for them and assume we were going to take a direct hit. Hurricane Laura was a different story.

Lake Charles is a city of blue tarp roofs right now. The storm stripped many homes right down to the roof beams. There was hardly a home or building in the city left untouched. The best way to describe it is to say the city was hit by a one huge tornado that took off roofs, downed trees and utility lines, flooded streets, broke windows and spawned all sorts of peripheral damage. What is left is a huge mess. There are debris everywhere. Work is already underway, supervised by LDEQ, to safely remove the debris and dispose of it in an environmentally safe fashion.

Although LDEQ’s Southwest Regional Office building did not sustain major damages, we were certainly not spared the storm’s wrath. We lost power to all our ambient air monitoring stations. This led to two MAML deployments to provide air quality monitoring in the area. The good news is that power has been restored to all five monitors in Calcasieu Parish and they are up, running and reporting data. Some of our personnel, who live in southwest Louisiana, were hard hit by the storm. They will take some time to recover, but our generous agency personnel have already begun collecting needed supplies for them and a delivery of relief items has already reached them.

This morning when I checked the National Weather Service, the Atlantic and Gulf maps were free of tropical disturbances. It’s been a while since it looked so clear. No one should take a victory lap yet, but it’s a hopeful sign. There will be an end to this very busy hurricane season. Let’s continue to keep our guard up, and go forward with a hopeful attitude.

Everyone stay alert and stay safe out there! Keep an eye out for yourself and for your coworkers.



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LDEQ evaluating water quality in Lake Charles

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) Secretary Chuck Carr Brown ordered teams from the Office of Environmental Assessment Water Survey Group to the Lake Charles area after reports of odors and poor water quality were received by the agency. The teams began work Friday, Sept. 11, and concentrated on Lake Charles and Prien lakes.

Earlier assessments by the agency indicated that large amounts of vegetation were impacted by the storm surge and saltwater intrusion of Hurricane Laura on Aug. 27. “The dead vegetation decays, and that process consumes dissolved oxygen from water bodies,” LDEQ Environmental Scientist David Greenwood said. “That oxygen depletion impacts both plant life and fish. We saw a fish kill in Lake Charles, and the dead fish and dead vegetation generate odors.”

Brown acknowledged the odors could be offensive, but in most cases, they are not a threat to human health and the environment. “The current situation will follow its natural course and dissipate as the tides flow in and out. We will work to model a timeframe.”

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fishery Secretary Jack Montoucet said his agency investigated the fish kill. “Our biologists reported low dissolved oxygen readings in waters near the fish kill, most likely from excessive amounts of decaying vegetation pushed in by Hurricane Laura’s surge waters and the continued decomposition of that vegetative material,” Montoucet said. “Biologists found species such as Gulf menhaden, mullet, catfish, carp, Atlantic croaker, red drum, black drum and others were present.”

Brown said LDEQ assessment teams are still working to locate any petroleum spills or leaks in the storm zone. He cautioned observers against assuming any sheen or dark material on water is from oil. Greenwood concurred. “If you don’t know what it is you’re looking at, you may not be able to tell if it’s oil or vegetative material,” Greenwood said. “When that vegetative material decays, it releases substances that can look exactly like an oil sheen. But it’s not.”

Greenwood said scientists in the field use the “stick test” to tell if a sheen is from oil or from decayed vegetative material. “You drag a stick through it, breaking it into pieces. If the pieces don’t come back together immediately, then it’s not oil.”

If you see anything you think is an environmental concern, call the LDEQ Single Point of Contact (SPOC) number to report it. The number for the SPOC hotline is (225) 219-3640, 1-888-763-5424 toll-free.

To view the Water Survey Group’s assessment, visit <https://bit.ly/3mro6TA>.



LDEQ Electronic Data Management System Redesign Project Update

The recent update of the LDEQ Electric Data Management System (EDMS) incorporated a Redesign Opinion Survey conducted in July-August. This survey provided the project team useful feedback, input on new features and the look and feel of EDMS. Some of the changes will be incorporated into this phase of the redesign, projected to be available in June 2021, or are being considered for future upgrades.

| Feedback | # of Mentions | How Addressing |
|--|---------------|--|
| Desire for a more condensed grid view of the search results screen (similar to current) instead of column data, allowing the user to see more results on the screen. | ~36 | We added an option to allow the end-user to choose a results screen view - either a grid/condensed version or a more detailed column of information. |
| Make the important elements on the screen more prominent, such as Date, AI Number, search terms, and keywords. | ~29 | We are designing the layout to easily find important elements on the screen, such as Date and AI. We are looking into bolding keywords and search terms and will add it as a consideration in the screen layout design. |
| Add a filter for "Date Range." | ~19 | This option has been incorporated into the design of the Advanced Search screen. |
| Add the ability to do wild card searches and searches with "near" spelling. | ~8 | The different options for a wild card type of search will include the ability to select: "All Words," "Any Words," or "Exact Phrase." We are also considering options for searching "near words" or incorrect spelling. |
| Enhance the ability to download search results into Excel. | ~6 | Currently, EDMS downloads search results into a .csv format. We designed the future downloads to be in the .xlsx format. |

The LDEQ team is considering several design changes based on the survey comments and feedback. Stay tuned for a sneak peek of the latest updates sometime in the near future.



Public hearings held under COVID-19 guidelines

Social distancing and associated health and safety guidelines are in place for public gatherings in Louisiana during the COVID-19 pandemic, and any public hearing held by LDEQ will fully comply with those guidelines.

LDEQ holds a public hearing upon request by a permit holder, citizen or through public interest. A public hearing is a forum that allows the public to comment on a particular permit or permit renewal for the record.

During the pandemic, the current situation presents a new way of holding public hearings, where an outdoor venue may be more suitable to holding one indoors. In St. James Parish, a recent public hearing was held outside under three tents, with each accommodating up to 50 people under the COVID-19 safety protocols for large crowd sizes.

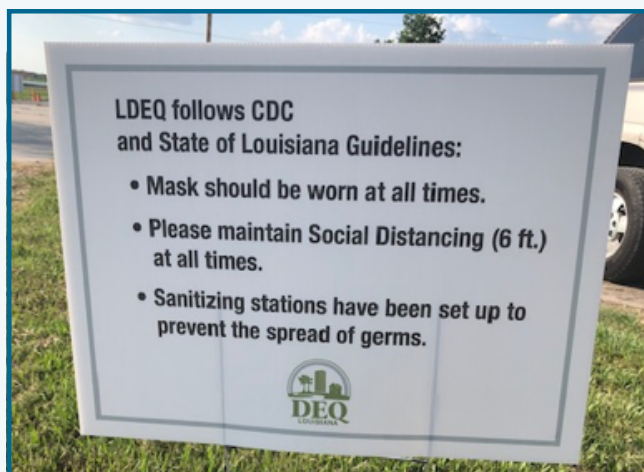
To provide some relief in the hot Louisiana climate, several air blowers were positioned into each tent. A public address system with a screen was also set up in each tent, along with even rows of chairs positioned 6 feet apart to allow for proper social distance seating. Hand-washing stations were placed outside each entrance and next to the portable restrooms. Security personnel were also on hand to enforce the wearing of masks and social distancing measures.

“In order to fully meet the safety measures and maintain order, LDEQ ensures that strict enforcement of those measures are in place,” LDEQ Attorney and Hearing Officer Rodney Barnes said. “All attendees must enter a series of stations that are set up to facilitate that process.”

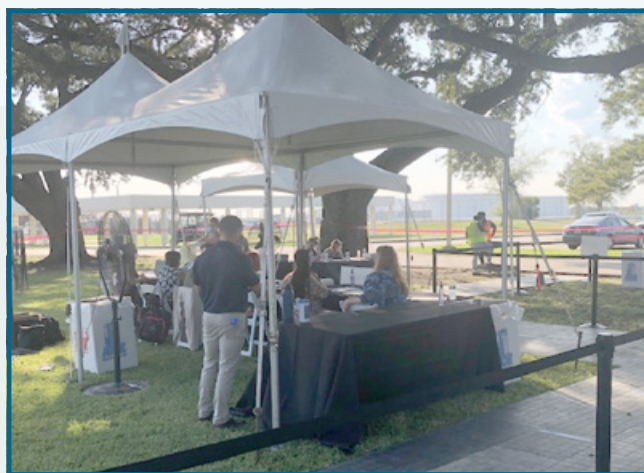
Anyone attending a public hearing will first receive a temperature check at the sign-in table. The attendee will then report to the next station where a stick-on pass will be presented, denoting their temperature check and assigned tent number before proceeding.

Public hearings are managed and moderated by an LDEQ attorney who serves as the hearing officer. The hearing officer ensures that order is maintained while speakers are allowed to provide comments for the record. Anyone wishing to provide comments signs up to speak at the beginning of the hearing. Those with correspondence, maps, charts, notes or other written data may submit those to the hearing officer, who will then annotate the item with an exhibit number for inclusion into the official record.

Under the COVID-19 guidelines, after each speaker concludes, an LDEQ staff member will wipe down the microphone with a disinfectant wipe.



Signage alerts attendees to the public health protocol under state and federal guidelines.



Registration stations include sign-in, temperature checks and tent assignments.

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While safety measures altered a few logistical elements, the overall public hearing process remains unchanged. The hearing affords the public an opportunity to express their opinion and provide comments on a proposed or active permit, with all comments recorded for the official public record. The hearing is not a question-and-answer session, but rather a forum in which the public may voice their opinion for the record. Based on the number of speakers on the list, the hearing officer will typically allow 5 to 10 minutes per speaker, with an opportunity for a speaker to return to the podium to add any additional comments after everyone on the list has spoken.

All comments, both for and against the permit, will be compiled by LDEQ, and all questions will be answered in writing in a comprehensive document within the Basis for Decision at the end of the comment period. Comments will be taken into consideration before the department decides on issuing, renewing or denying the permit.

LDEQ will make a decision regarding issuance or denial of the permit after all data from the public and the facility have been received and analyzed. The final permit decision is sent out to everyone who commented on the permit, spoke at the hearing (if held) or signed up to be notified of the final permit decision at the hearing (if there was one). The public can also access the final decision, comments and all pertinent information about the permit or modification on LDEQ's Electronic Data Management System (EDMS) at www.deq.louisiana.gov/edms.

For more information on the Public Participation Group and the public hearing process, please visit <https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/the-public-participation-group>.



Information tables and hand-washing stations outside tents are provided.



Screens and public address systems allow for the public to social distance during the hearing.



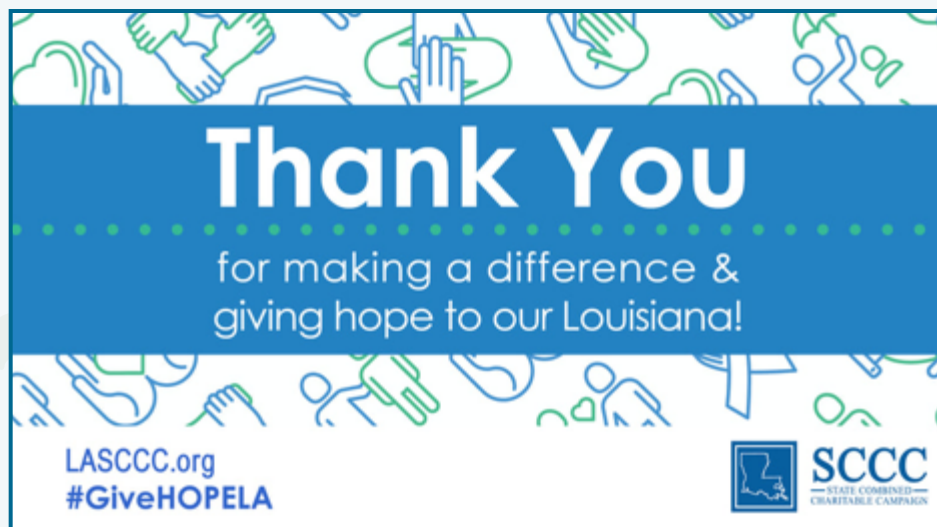
LDEQ is proud to support the Louisiana State Combined Charitable Campaign

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's (LDEQ) giving season begins well before December. LDEQ kicks off the Louisiana State Combined Charitable Campaign (LA SCCC) on Oct. 1 and will continue fundraising efforts through Dec. 1.

The year 2020 marks the sixth year LDEQ has participated in the LA SCCC. The campaign is the only state-approved charitable activity that enables payroll-deducted gifts from employees of state agencies. This program allows LDEQ employees to designate an ongoing or one-time contribution to their choice of up to four health and human service charities participating in the LA SCCC. Fifty-nine charities are participating in 2020, all of which provide much needed health and human services throughout the state.

Annually, all health and human service non-profit agencies registered in good standing with the state are eligible to apply to be a part of this campaign. If the charity of your choice was not included, please note that it is up to the discretion of the charity to apply annually, or they may not meet all requirements.

More information will be shared if other special events and fundraising activities are planned. Thank you to everyone who has donated and participated in LDEQ's fundraising in the past. We hope you will continue to contribute. For more information, visit www.lasccc.org. For a one-time donation, visit www.givelasccc.org.





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LDEQ's 2020 Environmental Leadership Program Awards cancelled

Due to continuing health concerns, the Louisiana Environmental Leadership Program (ELP) Awards will not hold the Environmental Leadership Awards for the 2020 calendar year. The ELP awards recognize commitment to voluntary pollution prevention, waste reduction, and other environmental stewardship efforts.

The cancellation does not diminish the phenomenal contributions that schools, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, federal entities, businesses and industries have made to enhance environmental quality.

The participants "thinking outside the box," making the financial investment(s), and putting forth the hard work required in coordinating and executing projects that "go above and beyond" are a great reward to our citizens and visitors, and to the quality of life that the state of Louisiana will offer for years to come.

Special thanks to the 2020 ELP award applicants who were diligent in sending applications prior to our notification of the ELP awards postponement. We hope to conduct the awards program in 2021, at which time, the 2020 applications will be given proper consideration.

New entities are welcome to join ELP anytime! Membership is free -- please join on our website at <https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/form/ELPmembership>.

LDEQ will continue to highlight new ELP members for "Welcome Wednesdays" on LDEQ's social media platforms. We look forward to seeing you there!

Also, you may visit our website at <https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/the-louisiana-environmental-leadership-program> for new member highlights and ELP Awards ceremony updates. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at elp@la.gov.





Join LDEQ and the Louisiana Brownfields Association for the 2020 Louisiana Brownfields Conference *Online Edition*

Join LDEQ and LBA for a three-webinar series on topics to help facilitate the reuse of vacant and abandoned properties in your community! Webinars will be held from 2-4 p.m. CDT on the following Wednesdays:

Sept. 30: Addressing Asbestos: An Ounce of Inspection is Worth a Pound of Cleanup

If your Brownfields site was built before 1978, you likely have asbestos-containing materials that need to be addressed prior to redevelopment. Learn from LDEQ experts how to address asbestos at your site effectively and efficiently, and how to avoid common pitfalls that can delay reuse.



Oct. 7: Opportunity Zone Update with U.S. HUD & APC

Opportunity Zones (OZs) are the hot topic in Brownfields redevelopment financing! Hear from representatives from the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Acadiana Planning Commission (APC) on how OZs have performed on both a national and local level, as well as how to position your project for OZ investment.

Oct. 14: I Found a Tank on my Site! Now What? Addressing Underground Storage Tanks

Discovering an underground storage tank (or 2, or 7) is common at Brownfield sites but it shouldn't stop the redevelopment of a wonderful property! In this session, hear from LDEQ UST experts on how to navigate the regulatory process to properly close and remove abandoned USTs, as well as resources available to help reduce the costs.

Webinars are free but registration is required to receive the log in information. (Note: This is an updated registration link. If you already registered via the Google form, your registration will be transferred over.) Participants are welcome to register for one, two or all three webinars. These webinars are open to all so please feel free to share this invitation with your contact lists!

[Click Here To Register](#)

Note for Zoom Registration:

To register for multiple webinars on a smart phone, select each webinar from the drop down list by clicking on the down arrow on the right side after each selection to bring up the other options again.

It appears that the Zoom calendar feature will download a new "Untitled" calendar instead of adding the events to your existing Outlook calendar. We recommend copying and pasting the meeting information from the "Untitled" calendar into your Outlook calendar to make sure the information pops up at the appropriate time/date.



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Who's Who At LDEQ?



Hannah Jones – Environmental Scientist, Radiation Section, Emergency & Radiological Services Division, Office of Environmental Compliance

Jones was born and raised in Watson. She moved to Baton Rouge and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from LSU in May 2018. While an undergraduate, she worked as a dance teacher and a pharmacy technician. She continued her work as a pharmacy technician after graduation before starting as a radiation inspector in the Emergency and Radiological Services Division in November 2019.

She enjoys LSU and Dallas Cowboys football, LSU gymnastics, reading and playing with her dachshund.

David Seymour – Environmental Scientist Supervisor, Air Permits Division – Manufacturing Section, Office of Environmental Services

Seymour was born and raised in Southern California and earned a bachelor's degree in environmental geography from California State Polytechnic University in May 2011. He moved to Baton Rouge in 2013 and started at LDEQ as an environmental scientist in Air Enforcement in 2014.

In December 2019, Seymour was promoted to Environmental Scientist Supervisor for the Manufacturing section of Air Permits. He likes to spend his free time on various road trips with his wife and two young kids.



Missy Day – Environmental Scientist, Permit Support, Office of Environmental Services

Day started at LDEQ in February 2020 and brings an assortment of experience to the asbestos permits group. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry and a Master of Science degree in textile science from LSU. Her master's thesis was entitled "Prediction of Formaldehyde Released from Durable Press Treated Fabrics."

For several years, Day worked as supervisor of the Textile Testing Lab at U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service, Southern Regional Research Center in New Orleans. She married her high school sweetheart, Mike, and as life happens, children soon appeared. Careers morphed into child rearing, followed by 12 years of teaching chemistry and algebra at Runnels School.

Day enjoys playing the piano, and she and her children often play in the orchestra at their church.





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Louisiana Department Of Environmental Quality's Second Quarter Summaries

Second Quarter 2020 Enforcement Actions:

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

Second Quarter 2020 Settlement Agreements:

<http://deq.louisiana.gov/page/enforcement-division>

Second Quarter 2020 Air Permits:

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

Second Quarter 2020 Water Permits:

<http://deq.louisiana.gov/page/lpdes>

Second Quarter 2020 Solid and Hazardous Waste Permits:

<http://deq.louisiana.gov/page/waste-permits>

