

Providing Public Testimony

Tips for effective written and oral comments



A Message from the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency

Background

The Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency's Board of Directors (Board) holds public comment periods and hearings when creating or amending regulations and fees. Comment periods and hearings are opportunities for the Board to receive oral and written comments from individuals who want to share their thoughts. The Board believes that public input is a very important part of the rule making process and therefore is committed to providing safe and effective public hearings.

Researching and Preparing Comments

Written and oral comments received are given equal consideration by the Board. Consider the following suggestions when preparing your comments:

- Make note of the public comment period deadline and begin your research early. Comments received after the deadline cannot be considered.
- If the rule raises several issues, select those that concern and affect you the most and/or you understand best. Consider including examples of how the proposed rule would impact you negatively or positively.
- Agency reviewers look for sound science and reasoning in the comments they receive. When possible, support your comment with substantive data, facts, and/or expert opinions.
- If you disagree with a proposed action, suggest an alternative (including no action at all) and include an explanation and/or analysis of how the alternative might meet the same objective or be more effective.
- The comment process is not a vote. The Agency is attempting to formulate the best policy, so it's important that your comments adequately explain the reasoning behind your position.
- Written comments are not limited in length but should be kept on point. Oral comments are often limited to three minutes. Writing down your comments or key points will help you stay on point and focused when you speak.

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Plan to arrive at the hearing on time. Provide your name and address on the sign-up sheet if you plan to provide oral remarks and your address is what is needed to let you know when the agency's response to comments received is available. If you have brought written comments, provide them to the designated staff member to ensure that they get included in the official record of public comments.



Making Oral Comments

- When your name is called, come up to the podium and start by clearly stating your name and address into the microphone.
- All comments should be directed to the Board and shall be confined to the matters that are specifically before the Board at that time. Hearings are for the Board to receive input, not to answer questions.
- Stay within the time frame set by the Board, which is typically three minutes and includes any closing statements and/or rebuttals you may have.
- If asserting a statement of fact, you may be asked to document and identify the source.

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Hearing Ground Rules

The Board believes all interested parties have a desire for a secure, non-intimidating and respectful atmosphere that allows all voices to be heard. Individuals who do not follow ground rules, thereby creating an unsafe or intimidating environment, will be asked to leave.

The following ground rules should support productive and civil hearings:

- Please hold down the noise – it's important to be able to hear everyone speak and to ensure a good recording of all comments.
- Silence cell phones during the hearing and step out of the room to have a conversation.
- Respect the right of others to have an opinion, even if you do not agree, including using respectful language.
- No distracting, disruptive or intimidating behavior, such as clapping, cheering, jeering or inappropriate gestures. This is disruptive and slows the process.
- Use respectful language. Demeaning and derogatory words are prohibited.
- Silent expressions of support or opposition, such as giving a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” are not considered disruptive.

About Us

Background - Founded in 1969, the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency works to achieve and maintain clean air in Spokane County, Washington by administering local, state and federal air quality laws and regulations.

We carry out our functions of air monitoring, permitting, enforcement and education and outreach with the support of our member entities, which includes Spokane County and its incorporated cities and towns of Spokane, Spokane Valley, Airway Heights, Cheney, Deer Park, Liberty Lake, Medical Lake, Latah, Millwood, Rockford, Spangle and Waverly.

History - The 1967 Washington Clean Air Act (Chapter 70A.15 RCW, formerly 70.94 RCW) authorized counties to activate local air agencies. There are seven local air agencies in the state. Counties that do not have a local air agency fall under the jurisdiction of the Washington State Department of Ecology.

For more information, call (509) 477-4727 or visit www.SpokaneCleanAir.org.

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