



What's Inside?

Open Burning of household waste is illegal in Louisiana

Message from the Secretary

LDEQ's CIS investigators ready to 'follow the evidence'

What's new at Shreveport Common?

EDMS redesign on track for implementation

"Stick test" can provide an initial check for sheen in waterways

LDEQ participates in Household Hazardous Materials Collection Day at LSU

Herman Robinson retires from LDEQ after 36 years of public service

LDEQ celebrates Employee Appreciation Week

Who's Who At LDEQ?

Open Burning of household waste is illegal in Louisiana

LDEQ responds to calls regarding open burning of household waste on a frequent basis. Although you may see residents conducting an open burn, sometimes including household waste such as chemicals and plastic containers, it is illegal. While some think nothing of it or believe it is an efficient way to get rid of their household waste, open burning of household waste, chemicals and plastic is not only against the law, it releases pollutants which present a danger in the air we breathe.



Open burns cause damage to a community's health and environment, as well as fire and emergency response personnel who must put their own health at risk to respond.

Any open burning of household waste (in the form of solids, liquids and gases) and solid waste (including discarded chemicals) is **ILLEGAL IN THE STATE OF LOUISIANA** – regardless of what parish in which it occurs and whether or not it's conducted on private property. There are no exceptions.

Examples of solid waste commonly open burned include processed lumber, cardboard, paper, plastic, metal, wire insulation, furniture and various household waste. Solid waste cannot be open burned legally.

Open burning household waste and/or chemicals is harmful to those physically conducting the open burn as well as their families, neighbors, pets and livestock. The ash generated from the burn may contain toxic materials that can contaminate air, soil and ground water. When burned, household trash can release toxic pollutants into the air, such as hydrogen chloride, hydrogen cyanide, phosgene, sulfur dioxide, dioxin, carbon monoxide and heavy metals. These pollutants can create health problems for anyone nearby, causing potentially serious consequences such as damage to the lungs, nervous system, kidneys and liver. Asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema and cancer are other potential problems.

Opening burning is one of the most common complaints LDEQ receives. Each of LDEQ's six regional offices and two substation offices are tasked with responding

Continued on page 2

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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY NEWSLETTER



October 2020 Issue Number: 105

to them. “The northeast region of the state receives a frequent number of open burning calls on a year-round basis, regardless of the season,” Casey Head, Regional Office Manager for LDEQ’s Northeast Regional Office based in West Monroe, said.

While many residents feel that the open burning of household waste is OK because it’s “something we’ve always done” or “what my father and grandfather did,” it’s not an excuse to skirt the law and blatantly impact the health and safety of your neighbors. Combatting that stubborn mentality is an effort that proves futile when some choose to deliberately ignore our health and environment by lighting a fire instead of choosing any number of safer, smarter and lawful alternatives (such as composting, recycling and reusing many items that are otherwise burned).

Louisianans can work together to change that mindset. Speak to your neighbors and relatives about the importance of stopping the open burning of household waste and/or chemicals. “We understand that burning seems like a quick and inexpensive way to dispose of household waste, but it is harmful to you, your neighbors and the environment, costing much more,” April Baiamonte, Regional Office Manager for LDEQ’s Capital Regional Office, said.

Many may not realize that most items destroyed in a burn can actually be saved and placed into a compost bin for subsequent use and create a positive, nutrient-rich boost to your soil. Mixing that composted material into the soil can directly benefit your plants, lawn and garden.

According to the EPA, you can compost fruits and vegetables, eggshells, coffee grounds, tea bags, nutshells, yard trimmings, grass clippings, houseplants, hay and straw, leaves, sawdust, wood chips, cotton and wool rags, dryer and vacuum cleaner lint, hair and fur, fireplace ashes (except coal or charcoal), shredded newspaper, paper and cardboard.

Check out EPA’s composting page for more information: www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home

LDEQ encourages citizens to report any open burn of waste tires, household debris, oil or chemical waste to your local fire department, law enforcement authorities and LDEQ at 1-888-763-5424. Citizens may also submit a complaint report online at www.deq.louisiana.gov/apps/forms/irf/forms.

Reports can be made anonymously (only by phone), and a phone number is required for a call back if further details are needed. Be sure to document the exact location and parish, time/date, materials being burned, parties involved and as much detail as possible in order to better assist authorities with an investigation.

If anyone is found to be conducting an illegal open burn, LDEQ’s Criminal Investigation Section may also investigate. Anyone found to be in violation of the law is subject to prosecution and may face fines, imprisonment or both.

Please view LDEQ’s informational video on open burning: www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yunEs3aYGY.

Alternatives To Open Burning

- Reduce, Recycle and Reuse as much as possible.
- Compost vegetative matter such as coffee grounds and fruit/vegetable peelings, eggshells for your garden to help enrich the soil by adding nutrients.
- Household paint and chemicals can be donated to contractors or brought to a Household Hazardous Materials Collection Day event for disposal – free of charge. Check your city or parish for locations/dates.
- In many jurisdictions, waste tires can be placed out on the curb on given days or brought to a landfill (check your parish for this service and the minimum number of tires that can be accepted). You can also bring waste tires to most Household Hazardous Materials Collection Day event – free of charge. Check your city or parish for locations/dates.
- Used fluorescent light bulbs, batteries and plastic grocery bags are accepted for recycling at many big box stores.
- Electronics (laptops, iPhones, etc.) you no longer need are accepted by the CACRC at www.cacrc.com.
- If you don’t have a trash pickup service, deliver household waste to a landfill or trash disposal location within your city or parish.
- Construction and demolition waste should be disposed of at permitted landfills, municipal incinerators or other state-approved facilities.



Message from the Secretary

Chuck Carr Brown, Ph.D.

Once again, I climbed aboard a plane and headed to Lake Charles to survey storm impacts. This time it was after Hurricane Delta. Flying over, we took a route down along the coast to see what damage Delta had added to the already considerable amount left by Hurricane Laura on August 27. I visited Lake Charles soon after that event in early September.

Here is the good news: Delta was not as destructive as it could have been. Here is the bad news: the Laura damage caused was extensive and remains to be cleaned up in many places. Our Incident Command Group A was activated after Laura and extended through Delta. The Incident Command members are still hard at work, dispatching assignments from the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) headquarters at the Galvez Building in Baton Rouge.

Staff at the Southwest Regional Office (SWRO) in Lake Charles took on dual roles: hurricane responders and hurricane survivors. Many of our employees in the Lake Charles office were still dealing with damages to their own homes and lives when Delta came roaring ashore. It was a bigger storm than Laura, more spread out, and more of our employees in Lake Charles, Lafayette and even Baton Rouge and Monroe were affected.

I can't say enough about how much I appreciated the great effort LDEQ employees have put forth in responding to these storms. Thank you to all, especially to those of you who managed to come to work when you had no electricity or air conditioning at home. For those who worked in the field chasing leaks and spills and environmental incidents of all sorts, you are simply the best. Those who planned and supervised and helped get needed supplies where they were needed are also critical contributors. I'm proud of all of our employees who served in many, many roles during the storms.

Our work is not done. But I know it will get done because I have faith in you. We will persevere.

While you are out and about, remember to wear a mask and practice social distancing. If you are dealing with storm debris, wear proper protective equipment, including shoes with protective soles/inserts and gloves if you are handling debris. Be aware of your surroundings. There are limbs hanging loose just, waiting to fall. There are trucks and traffic picking up debris and responding to calls. Don't make them look for you. Stay out of their way. Be safe and watch out for your co-workers. Keep them safe too.

One last thing I will ask you to do. Go vote. It's important. So many people on this planet don't have the right to vote, never get to participate in the inspiring process of a free election. You get to do that, but only if you make the effort. Do it. Vote.



I visited a debris staging site and spoke with Crowder Gulf debris removal specialists in Lake Charles on Oct. 15. Members of the LDEQ Executive Staff accompanied me.



LDEQ's CIS investigators ready to 'follow the evidence'

“We just follow the evidence,” LDEQ Criminal Investigator Keith Bates says. Bates is the spokesperson for the five-person law enforcement force that operates under LDEQ's Office of the Secretary.

“We follow the Louisiana Constitution and follow the rules of evidence,” Bates said. That means serving warrants, conducting surveillance and investigative activities and any other activities necessary to carry out their jobs. The CIS officers are certified law enforcement officers with full powers of arrest in Louisiana. They are armed and wear badges.

“We are responsible for investigating environmental crimes under the Environmental Quality Act,” Bates said. “Sometimes, we venture into criminal statutes.”

Criminal investigators include Bates, who works out of headquarters in Baton Rouge; Sherita Holden, who works north Louisiana, including the Shreveport and Monroe areas; Kevin Scott and Todd Compton, also working out of Baton Rouge; and Robert Kingham, who works out of Lake Charles.

All the CIS investigators have prior law enforcement experience before coming to LDEQ, Bates said. Some have worked at various sheriff's departments or police departments around the state. They boast more than 120 years of combined law enforcement experience. To stay sharp, they pursue a rigorous training schedule.

“We have all evolved. We are not complacent,” Bates said. “We keep fresh with training. In-service training is required by state and LDEQ regulations. It works well, and some of us are reserve officers with the sheriff's office and get additional training which we benefit from.”

The investigators also network heavily with their counterparts in other law enforcement agencies, Bates said. And those counterparts use the connection to LDEQ to help them when they are faced with enforcing environmental laws.

“The Environmental Quality Act can be a complex thing to enforce,” he said. “Not only do we have to have a pretty good grasp of things, but we also have to be able to explain it to other agencies that we pair with.”

To report an environmental crime to LDEQ CIS, call 225-219-3944 or submit an online Criminal Complaint Form at www.deq.louisiana.gov/form/criminal-investigation-section-complaint-form.



The LDEQ Criminal Investigative Section (CIS), from left, Sherita Holden, Kevin Scott, Todd Compton, Robert Kingham and Keith Bates.



What's new at Shreveport Common?

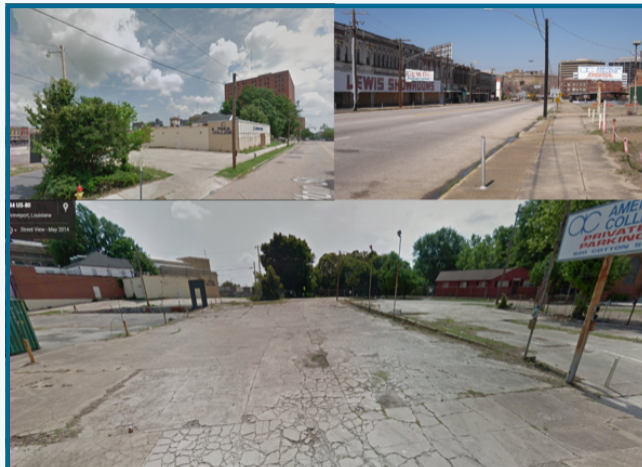
New to the Shreveport Common project is a 2.4-acre green space in downtown Shreveport called Caddo Common, positioned in the center of the project area.

The Common is a historic nine-block blighted area in Shreveport that is being revitalized into a creative cultural community and green space for the public to rest and recreate. Consisting of nine contiguous parcels in the 800 block of Texas Avenue in Shreveport, Caddo Common marks the first downtown urban green space in the area and is a cornerstone for redevelopment.

The park opened Nov. 2, 2019, with a large “FriendsWithYou” Rainbow City parade, which ended at the new Caddo Common park.

Many pieces came together, and a lot of money was invested in order to build green space. The Phase I Environmental Site Assessment conducted by Shreveport Parks and Recreation in 2012 was the beginning of the project, at the cost of \$4,300.

In 2014, Voluntary Remediation Program investigation funding by the LDEQ Brownfields Program in the amount of \$92,887 had to be completed. Funding from the city of Shreveport’s Park Capital Project for \$149,307 helped with cleanup costs. Phase I was funded by the city of Shreveport with economic development funds for \$1.2 million and Brownsfield remediation grant dollars. Currently, the total investment in the area comes to \$51 million; \$33 million of that is by private stakeholders, developers and property owners.



Caddo Common, part of the Shreveport Common project, before revitalizing 2.4 acres into green space.



Caddo Common after the renovation as the first downtown green space in Shreveport.



The park opened Nov. 2 with a large FriendsWithYou Rainbow City parade, which ended at the new Caddo Common Park. More photos: www.shreveportcommon.com/news.

Continued on page 6



DISCOVER DEQ

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY NEWSLETTER



October 2020 Issue Number: 105



Caddo Common under construction



Brandee McCarthy, LDEQ Southwest Regional Office; Duane Wilson, LDEQ, and Wes Wyche, city of Shreveport, survey the construction of the Caddo Common green space.

For Phase II, the Caddo Parish Commission provided one million dollars to match one million dollars from private donations. “The first bulldozer in what is now the park was the signal property owners and developers were waiting for to start the risky and challenging restoration of historic properties,” Wendy Benscoter, Executive Director of Shreveport Common, said. “Today, 26 preservation and redevelopment construction projects have been completed in the nine-block area, and nine properties are currently under construction.”

“The public/private partnership to complete the Phase II amenities, such as the outdoor performance pavilion and food truck court with artist-trees, has motivated even more interest in creating mixed-use, mixed-income residential, artist studios, makerspaces and marketplaces. Fourteen additional properties are currently in predevelopment,” Benscoter said.

The Shreveport Common project area is home to eight Historic National Registry properties and several state-listed endangered buildings. This area had been a diverse cultural and entrepreneurial mecca since the 1920s. In the 1950s, this is where Hank Williams, Johnny Cash and Elvis Presley got their start on the KWKH Louisiana Hayride. By 2010, the population had decreased by 75% from 8,000, leaving 64% of the remaining historic buildings empty. Most residents lived in transitional housing or high density, low-income housing.

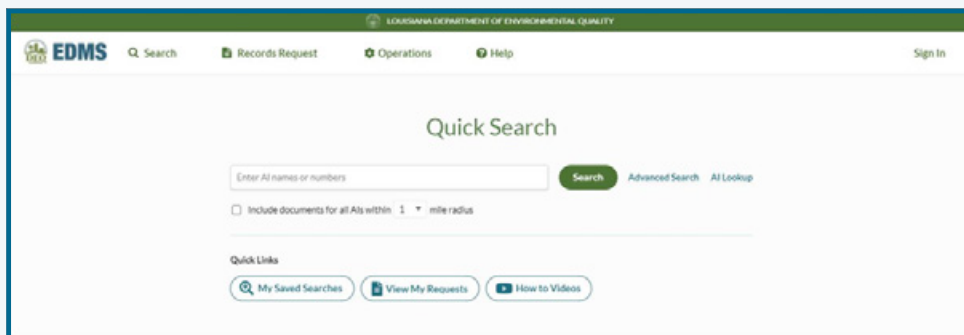
What’s Different? Today, over 30 public/private partners are transforming the area following a year-long creative placemaking vision planning process. The transformation is being built on the authenticity of the area, creativity, sustainability and for the community. There will be no displacement to the current neighbors – instead, keeping them integral to the revitalization.



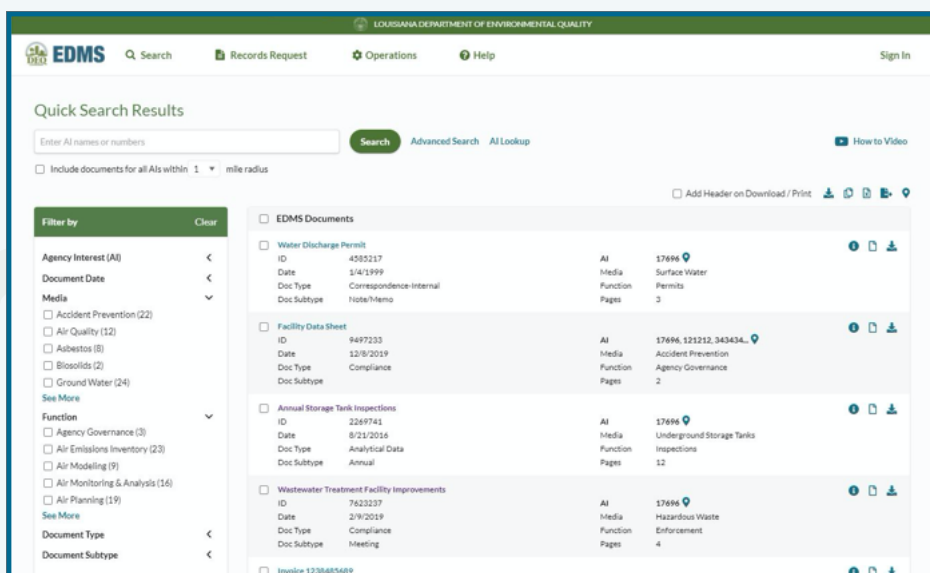
EDMS redesign on track for implementation

The EDMS Redesign Project team is currently developing a user interface for the new EDMS. Below are screenshots of some of the key pages and their new features.

The **Quick Search** page will serve as the EDMS landing page, which you see when you first access EDMS. One of the new features is the ability to search for one or multiple Agency Interest numbers (AIs). You will also be able to include documents for all AIs within a certain mile radius. From this page, you can also access Advanced Search, AI Lookup, Saved Searches, How-to Videos and other features.



The **Quick Search Results** page provides a grid view of the relevant documents and additional information about each document retrieved. On the left side of the screen, you will be able to refine search results by selecting one or more filters, such as AI, Document Date, Media, Function, Document Type and Document Sub-type.



The redesign team is on track to roll out the new features of EDMS in June 2021.

If you have any questions or comments about the EDMS redesign, please contact the team at edmsquestions@la.gov.



“Stick test” can provide an initial check for sheen in waterways



Organic or vegetative sheens such as this are often misidentified as being oil-based.

While hurricane season often brings a disruption in the appearance and makeup of many water bodies in Louisiana, it's important for environmental scientists to quickly determine what's a concern or potential concern versus occurrences that are harmless, routine or naturally occurring. While the department will receive a few reports of oil sheen sightings in the wake of storms and hurricanes, many times, these sheens are actually of an organic or vegetative variety, do not consist of oil, diesel or gas, and therefore do not pose a threat to the environment.

Since oil sheens often look similar in appearance to sheens that are organic or consist of vegetative matter, there's a test that can be administered to reveal what the sheen consists of. The test, known informally as a "stick test," is designed to quickly make the determination.

The test consists of running a wooden stick through the sheen. "If the matter in the sheen, or slick, separates and does not come back

together, that's an indication that the sheen consists of vegetative matter," said Dwight Bradshaw, LDEQ Senior Environmental Scientist. "If, on the other hand, the sheen matter quickly comes back together after the stick passes through, then it's a good sign that oil is present."

Organic or vegetative sheens such as this are often misidentified as being oil-based.

As with any issue in a water body in the state that may appear to be unusual in nature, such as a sheen, fish kill, water discoloration or chemical intrusion, the department will take action. Upon notification or discovery of the issue, LDEQ will conduct an investigation to determine if any constituents of concern are present and if any further environmental response or remediation activity needs to be initiated. The goal is to ensure all waterways in the state meet their designated uses, such as recreational use (i.e., swimming, boating and fishing) and/or aquatic and wildlife propagation.

Attached video posted on the Facebook page of the Ausable River Association in the state of New York shows an example of how the stick test is conducted: www.facebook.com/watch/?v=476992679773643&extid=L3QUdEoWNV42Vw14

Reports of any environmental issues noted above can be submitted to LDEQ by calling the Single Point of Contact line at 1-888-763-5424 or by filing an online complaint form at www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/file-a-complaint-report-an-incident. LDEQ personnel will follow up on the inquiry and launch an investigation should the situation warrant.



LDEQ participates in Household Hazardous Materials Collection Day at LSU

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) employees played mixologists at the East Baton Rouge Household Hazardous Materials Collection Day (HHMCD) Saturday, Oct. 17. LDEQ employees joined other volunteers on Louisiana State University's campus to help East Baton Rouge Parish residents properly dispose of unwanted hazardous materials.

These materials, such as paint, electronics and chemicals, require special care when you dispose of them. Improper disposal of potentially hazardous substances can include pouring them down the drain, on the ground, into storm sewers or, in some cases, putting them out with the regular trash. Improper disposal of these products can pollute the environment and pose a threat to human health.

The LDEQ volunteers' role in HHMC day is to run the latex paint station. Volunteers stir the paint, mix the various colors of paint together in five gallon containers to be collected by Habitat for Humanity. There, the organization stocks it in their Habitat for Humanity ReStore, where the reusable paint can be resold to the public instead of being tossed on the road or ending up in a landfill. Volunteers created 174 five-gallon buckets of new latex paint for ReStore and served approximately 141 vehicles.



Volunteers mix reusable paints into new colors for Habitat for Humanity ReStore to sell.

The agency hopes citizens recycle year-round and are always mindful of the disposal of household hazardous materials. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests following these quick tips for the safe handling of household hazardous materials (HHM):

- Follow any instructions for use and storage provided on product labels carefully to prevent any accidents at home.
- Be sure to read product labels for disposal directions to reduce the risk of products exploding, igniting, leaking, mixing with other chemicals, or posing other hazards on the way to a disposal facility.
- Never store hazardous products in food containers; keep them in their original containers and never remove labels. Corroding containers, however, require special handling. Call your local hazardous materials official or fire department for instructions.
- When leftovers remain, never mix HHM with other products. Incompatible products might react, ignite or explode, and contaminated HHM might become unrecyclable.
- Remember, even empty containers of HHM can pose hazards because of the residual chemicals, so handle them with care also.

Citizens can also visit <https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice> to explore safer choices. This website will help consumers, businesses and purchasers find products that perform and contain ingredients that are safer for human health and the environment.

LDEQ volunteers will also be at the St. Landry Parish Solid Waste 2020 Household Hazardous Waste Day Saturday, Nov. 7, at St. Landry Parish Recycling Center. For more information, contact the St. Landry Parish Recycling Center at 337-942-9576 or 337-457-1336.



DISCOVER DEQ

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY NEWSLETTER



October 2020 Issue Number: 105

Herman Robinson retires from LDEQ after 36 years of public service

DEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown (right) presents General Counsel Herman Robinson with a certificate of appreciation signed by Gov. John Bel Edwards following the Sept. 28 meeting of the LDEQ Executive Staff. Robinson retired at the end of September after serving the agency for 36 years in the legal department. We all wish Herman the very best.





DISCOVER DEQ

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY NEWSLETTER



October 2020 Issue Number: 105

LDEQ celebrates Employee Appreciation Week Sept. 28 - Oct. 2





Who's Who At LDEQ?



Julie Huynh – Environmental Scientist, Water Enforcement, Office of Environmental Compliance

Huynh is a Slidell native who moved to Baton Rouge in 2013 to attend Louisiana State University (LSU). Graduating in 2017 with a Bachelor of Science degree in conservation biology, she recently joined LDEQ's Office of Environmental Compliance as an Environmental Scientist with Water Enforcement.

Huynh was previously employed as a biologist with G.E.C. (Gulf Engineers and Consultants) and enjoys camping, LSU football, outdoor activities and reading.

Remy Boudreaux – Environmental Scientist IV, Air Field Services, Office of Environmental Assessment

Boudreaux earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in December 2002. He worked for U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Forest Service during college before joining LDEQ in March 2003 in Ambient Air Monitoring/Air Field Services.

He has enjoyed the unique mix of both science and problem-solving in fieldwork. Boudreaux resides with his wife and three children in Baton Rouge. He's thankful for his job and for having recently been promoted to Environmental Scientist IV in February.



Kathryn Ribble – Environmental Scientist II, Surveillance Division, Office of Environmental Compliance, Capital Regional Office

Ribble is from Florida, where she earned both her Bachelor of Science degree in marine science and a Master of Science degree in environmental science from Florida Gulf Coast University. Recently, she relocated to Baton Rouge and started working for LDEQ in June 2020. Ribble is passionate about marine and environmental research/conservation and community outreach.

In her free time, she enjoys being outdoors, with some of her favorite hobbies being backpacking, open water swimming, rock climbing and sailing.



DISCOVER DEQ

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY NEWSLETTER



October 2020 Issue Number: 105

Louisiana Department Of Environmental Quality's Third Quarter Summaries

Third Quarter 2020 Enforcement Actions:

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

Third Quarter 2020 Settlement Agreements:

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

Third Quarter 2020 Air Permits:

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

Third Quarter 2020 Water Permits:

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

Third Quarter 2020 Solid and Hazardous Waste Permits:

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

