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How to Request a Public Meeting with the TCEQ (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality)

If a permit is proposed for a new or expanded facility (like a data center that's planning to build polluting energy infrastructure, or a chemical plant that will discharge plastic into local waterways) in your community, you have the right to ask for a public meeting. This guide walks you through how to do that - step by step.

What Is a Public Meeting?

A public meeting is a community meeting where you can:

- Learn about a proposed project or permit
- Ask questions directly to TCEQ and the permit applicant
- Share your concerns or comments

No final decisions on the permit are made at a public meeting, but raising concerns and questions early can influence what comes next. Public meetings are also important for transparency and community involvement. They force the TCEQ to engage with the public and community members, while drawing public attention to important issues. Comments made during public meetings are considered official comments, which can also be helpful to reference during contested case hearings.

Now, a public meeting is ***different*** from a ***public hearing*** *(aka contested case hearing)***,** which is a more structured process. Contested case hearings are formal, quasi-judicial proceedings (often conducted by the State Office of Administrative Hearings) used to gather sworn testimony for official evidence. Public meetings allow dialogue with staff, as well as public comment, while hearings involve recorded, adversarial testimony.

Public meetings happen early in the permitting process, but they must be requested and are not guaranteed. TCEQ will hold a public meeting based on the level of public interest, a request from a local legislator, or, if applicable, other legal requirements.

Who Can Request a Public Meeting?

Anyone can request a public meeting. You do not need to be an expert, a lawyer, or part of an organization, and you don't have to live in the community potentially affected by the proposed project. Those who can request public meetings include:

- Residents
- Property owners and businesses
- Community groups or nonprofits
- Elected officials who represent the affected area (state representatives or senators)
- Any interested member of the public

You also do not need to prove that you could be directly affected by the project to request a public meeting.

When Can You Request a Public Meeting?

You can request a public meeting after a permit application is submitted, and again during the public comment period once TCEQ issues a public notice. A public notice is an official announcement published in a local newspaper or TCEQ website that opens a window for public comments. After the formal public comment period closes, it is unlikely that requests for a public meeting will be considered by the agency.

Step-by-Step: How to Request a Public Meeting

1. Find the Permit Information

You'll need basic details about the project that you can find using the TCEQ database or using the information from the public notice, including:

1. Permit number
2. Applicant name
3. Location

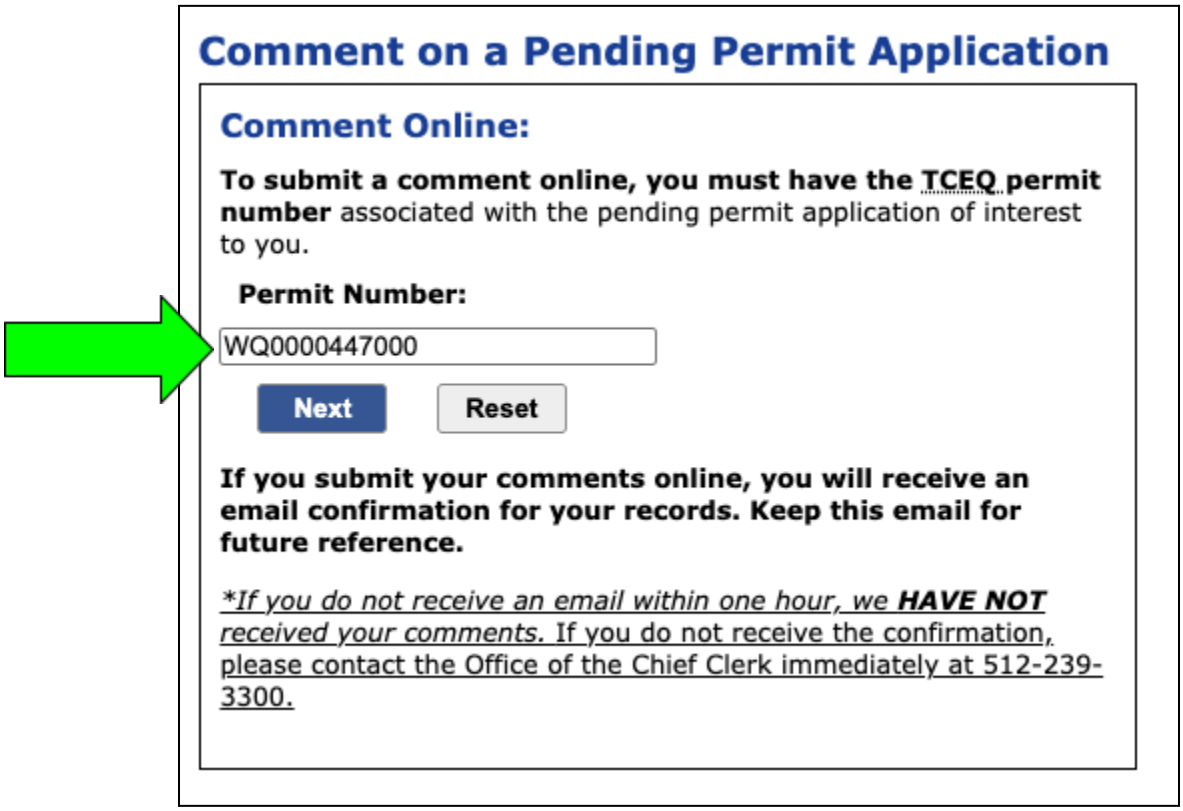
What if you don't know the permit number? Well, if you have some basic information about the facility, you should be able to find the permit number either by searching the TCEQ Public Notice database (https://www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eNotice/). As long as you know the county in which the proposed facility or permit is located, you should be able to find it.

However, if a notice has yet to be issued, you should be able to find additional information through the Central Registry (https://www15.tceq.texas.gov/crpub/). The Central Registry allows you to search by document, program type, regulated entity or customer.

2. Submit Your Request

Option A: Online (Easiest)

1. Use the TCEQ online comment system to locate the permit application. For example:



Comment on a Pending Permit Application

Comment Online:

To submit a comment online, you must have the TCEQ permit number associated with the pending permit application of interest to you.

Permit Number:

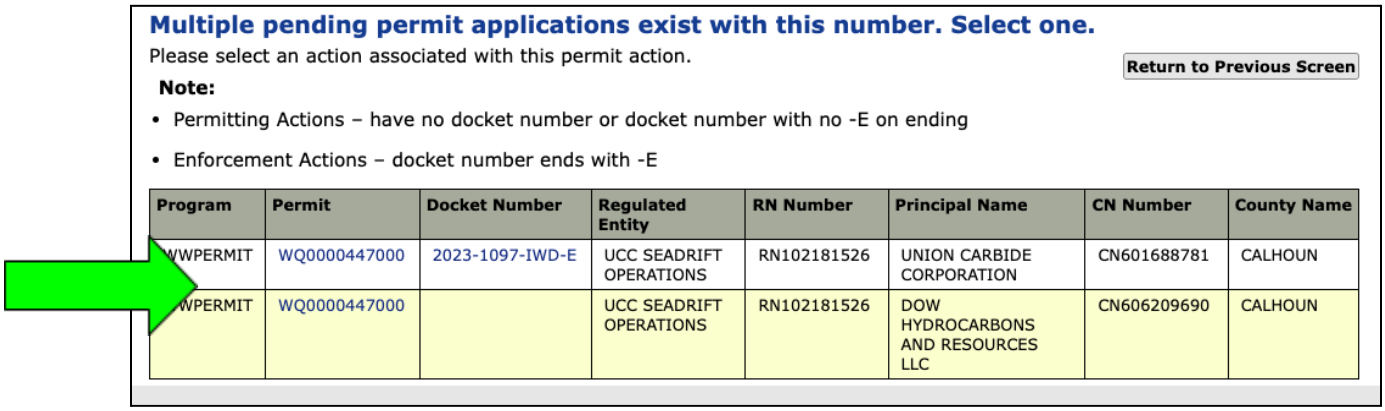
WQ0000447000

Next Reset

If you submit your comments online, you will receive an email confirmation for your records. Keep this email for future reference.

If you do not receive an email within one hour, we **HAVE NOT received your comments.* If you do not receive the confirmation, please contact the Office of the Chief Clerk immediately at 512-239-3300.

2. From the results, select the permit you're interested in.



Multiple pending permit applications exist with this number. Select one.

Please select an action associated with this permit action.

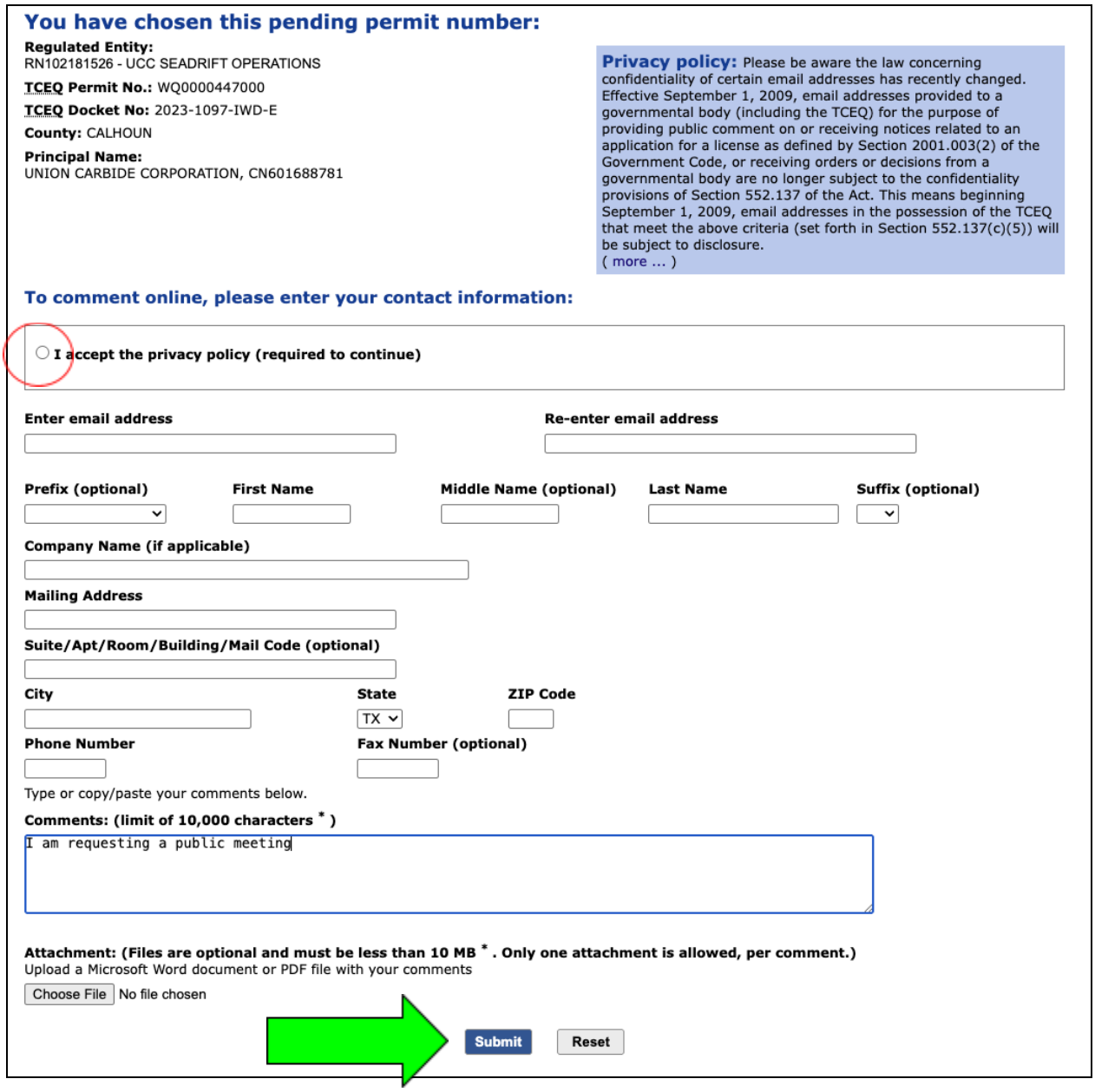
Return to Previous Screen

Note:

- Permitting Actions – have no docket number or docket number with no -E on ending
- Enforcement Actions – docket number ends with -E

Program	Permit	Docket Number	Regulated Entity	RN Number	Principal Name	CN Number	County Name
WWPERMIT	WQ0000447000	2023-1097-IWD-E	UCC SEADRIFT OPERATIONS	RN102181526	UNION CARBIDE CORPORATION	CN601688781	CALHOUN
WPERMIT	WQ0000447000		UCC SEADRIFT OPERATIONS	RN102181526	DOW HYDROCARBONS AND RESOURCES LLC	CN606209690	CALHOUN

3. Fill out the contact information form, and in the Comments field include this exact phrase: ***"I am requesting a public meeting."***



You have chosen this pending permit number:

Regulated Entity:
RN102181526 - UCC SEADRIFT OPERATIONS

TCEQ Permit No.: WQ0000447000

TCEQ Docket No: 2023-1097-IWD-E

County: CALHOUN

Principal Name:
UNION CARBIDE CORPORATION, CN601688781

Privacy policy: Please be aware the law concerning confidentiality of certain email addresses has recently changed. Effective September 1, 2009, email addresses provided to a governmental body (including the TCEQ) for the purpose of providing public comment on or receiving notices related to an application for a license as defined by Section 2001.003(2) of the Government Code, or receiving orders or decisions from a governmental body are no longer subject to the confidentiality provisions of Section 552.137 of the Act. This means beginning September 1, 2009, email addresses in the possession of the TCEQ that meet the above criteria (set forth in Section 552.137(c)(5)) will be subject to disclosure.
(more ...)

To comment online, please enter your contact information:

I accept the privacy policy (required to continue)

Enter email address

Re-enter email address

Prefix (optional) **First Name** **Middle Name (optional)** **Last Name** **Suffix (optional)**

Company Name (if applicable)

Mailing Address

Suite/Apt/Room/Building/Mail Code (optional)

City **State** **ZIP Code**
TX

Phone Number **Fax Number (optional)**

Type or copy/paste your comments below.

Comments: (limit of 10,000 characters *)

I am requesting a public meeting

Attachment: (Files are optional and must be less than 10 MB * . Only one attachment is allowed, per comment.)
Upload a Microsoft Word document or PDF file with your comments

Choose File No file chosen

Submit Reset

4. Click "*Submit*".

Option B: By Mail

Send a written request to:

Office of the Chief Clerk (MC 105)
TCEQ
P.O. Box 13087
Austin, Texas 78711-3087

Be sure to:

- Include the details of the permit you're commenting on, such as the permit number
- Clearly state you are requesting a public meeting

3. Use the Correct Wording (Very Important)

TCEQ is strict about wording:

- "Public meeting" = what you want for a community discussion
- "Public hearing" = a contested case hearing (legal process to challenge a permit decision)

*Note: If you write "request a public hearing," TCEQ will **NOT** count it as a public meeting request.*

Getting Your Legislators Involved

One of the most effective ways to ensure a public meeting is held is to ask your State Representative or State Senator to request one on behalf of your community. If a local state legislator requests a public meeting, ***TCEQ is required to hold it.***

Why does this matter?

- Individual requests from the public may or may not result in a public meeting
- The level of "public interest" required for a meeting to be held is unclear
- A legislator request removes that uncertainty - a meeting must be held

How to Ask Your Legislator

1. Identify Your Representatives

Find out who your Texas State Representative and Texas State Senators are by searching your home address on the Texas Legislature website, or https://wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home.

2. Contact Their Offices

You can reach out by:

- Email (best for documentation)
- Phone call
- Office contact form on their website

Example Message to Your Legislators

Hello,

I am your constituent writing about a proposed [project/permit name] in [location].

I am concerned and would like the opportunity to learn more and ask questions about the project directly. I am respectfully asking that you submit a request to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for a public meeting on this permit.

A request from your office would ensure that a meeting is held, and that community members have a chance to learn more about this proposal and voice their concerns.

Thank you for your time and for representing our community.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Address]

What Happens After TCEQ Grants a Public Meeting?

If TCEQ determines that a public meeting is necessary, the agency will announce the meeting details on their website and in the local newspaper. Requesting a meeting is just the beginning - showing up and participating is what makes your voice heard. Even if the issue is emotional to you, it's important to stay respectful and constructive, so your concerns are taken seriously. Organize friends, neighbors, and reach out to local media to get as much attention on the issue as possible.

What Happens If TCEQ Denies Your Request for a Public Meeting?

If TCEQ decides not to hold a public meeting, you still have important ways to participate and take action. You can continue to submit written comments during the public comment period - TCEQ is required to review and respond to relevant comments before making a final decision.

If you are directly affected by the proposed project, you may also request a contested case hearing; however, you must demonstrate that you are an "affected party." You can also still contact your State Representative or State Senator and ask them to request a public meeting on behalf of the community, which may still result in one being scheduled.

No matter the outcome, community members should continue organizing by encouraging others to submit comments, raising awareness locally, and working with local organizations or media outlets. Even if a public meeting is denied, staying engaged and drawing as much public attention as possible is critical to influencing TCEQ's decision.

Get Involved With the Sierra Club Lone Star Chapter

If you want to stay in the loop about our work with the TCEQ and our other advocacy efforts across Texas, or if you have any questions about how to request a public meeting, email us at lonestar.chapter@sierraclub.org.