

# Routine Application Process

The Routine Application Process is for waste discharge applications that require technical assessments and reviews by ministry staff to inform good authorization decisions that are protective of the environment. These are applications for activities described in the Waste Discharge Regulation under the *Environmental Management Act* (EMA) that require a permit, approval or operational certificate (new or amended). More complex regulatory registration processes under the Municipal Wastewater Regulation and Hazardous Waste Regulation are also managed according to the Routine Application Process. Other more simple registration and notification processes and minor administrative amendments to existing authorizations (such as name or address changes) do not follow this process, and instead are managed according to the Express Transaction Process.

The Routine Application Process has four phases:

Phase	Description
<b>Intake Phase</b>  <i>Same for all EMA transactions, both Express and Routine</i>	<p>This is the initial phase when all incoming applications are sorted by transaction type (Express or Routine) then checked for administrative completeness prior to being entered into the Ministry's Authorizations Management System (AMS) and assigned a tracking number.</p> <p>Incomplete applications are returned to the applicant and will not be entered into AMS.</p>
<b>Preliminary Application Phase</b>	<p>This phase confirms the minimum requirements of the Application Package which are necessary to inform a statutory decision. This phase results in a detailed Application Instruction Document (AID) which is provided to the applicant.</p> <p><i>Applicant Work Window</i>  The period of time when the applicant completes the work required to produce a Final Application package for the ministry. Once the AID is issued, the amount of time required to generate the Final Application package is at the discretion of the applicant, but the work window cannot exceed 36 months from the date the tracking number is assigned.</p>

<b>Screening Phase</b>	This phase confirms that the requisite technical information and other supporting materials defined in the AID are provided in sufficient quantity and quality.
<b>Review and Decision Phase</b>	This phase includes a detailed review of the application including technical documents as well as the public consultation and First Nations engagement record. The development of requirements that will form the authorization for the Director's consideration is also completed.

## Intake Phase

The Intake Phase is the same for both Express and Routine Applications. This phase is important for workflow tracking and management purposes. Victoria Permit Administration (in Business Services Branch) receives all preliminary applications (or final applications where applicable), registrations and notifications, and will ensure that all requisite administrative information is present.

In the majority of cases, applicants applying for Routine Authorizations will submit a Preliminary Application Form with information and supporting documentation describing the project or activity they are proposing to conduct (or the amendment they are requesting, if they have an existing authorization). This information provides the necessary details to allow efficient engagement with ministry staff in the Preliminary Application Phase. In rare circumstances when applicants have extensive experience applying for EMA authorizations, they may choose to also conduct the necessary assessments and consultation prior to contacting the Ministry and they may submit a Final Application Package along with their Preliminary Application Form and they may request an exemption from the Preliminary Application Phase.

Incomplete applications, registrations and notifications are not accepted. Incomplete applications are returned to the applicant and not tracked in the Ministry's Authorizations Management System (AMS). Applications, registrations and notifications that are complete will be assigned an AMS tracking number and will proceed either within the Express Transaction (simple) Process or the Routine Application (more complex) Process.

Applicants with Routine Applications will be notified of their tracking number at the end of the Intake Phase and they will be provided with information about what to expect in the Preliminary Application Phase.

## Preliminary Application Phase

The purpose of the Preliminary Application Phase is to determine the components and requirements needed for a complete Final Application Package. This involves ministry staff providing the applicant with clear guidance, direction and communication on the technical information requirements and the public and First Nation engagement activities required in the Final Application Package (i.e. Technical Assessment Report and Consultation Report).

The Preliminary Application Phase begins once the applicant receives a tracking number after successfully submitting a complete Preliminary Application Form. Shortly after the tracking number is issued, ministry staff will contact the applicant to arrange a time and location for a meeting to discuss the details of the proposed project/activity.

This Preliminary Application Meeting is particularly important, as some projects/activities will require more detailed assessments and supporting information than others. Each situation is addressed on a case-by-case basis.

In preparation for the Preliminary Application Meeting, it is recommended that applicants do the following:

- Become familiar with the *Environmental Management Act*, applicable regulations and any ministry guidelines relevant to the proposed discharge. They may wish to seek legal opinion as to their rights and obligations under the act and regulations.
- Become familiar with other government requirements (local, provincial, federal). For example, local governments have land use authority. It is recommended that the appropriate land use approvals for the project be sought before applying for a permit.
- Become familiar with guidance documents for the Technical Assessment Report and Consultation Report. These reports may be required in the Final Application Package.
- Become familiar with the specific Information Requirements Tables that are relevant to the proposed project.
- Provide as much detail about the applicant, waste sources, treatment, discharge characteristics, discharge location and receiving environment as possible.

After the Preliminary Application Meeting, the ministry will provide an Application Instruction Document (AID) which summarizes all the information requirements for the Final Application Package. The Preliminary Application Phase ends when the applicant has met the requirements as instructed in the AID and submits all of the required elements in a draft Final Application Package. This must be completed within 36 months of receiving the tracking number, otherwise the tracking number will expire and the applicant must re-apply at the Intake Phase.

## Screening Phase

The Screening Phase confirms if the draft Final Application Package contains the necessary information identified in the Preliminary Application Phase. During the Screening Phase, the Application Package is screened for administrative as well as technical completeness. It will also confirm the technical complexity of the application which will determine target timelines for the final Review and Decision Phase.

The Screening Phase purpose is to verify that the Final Application Package contains information of sufficient quality and quantity necessary to support a decision. It is not intended to be a full review of the Application Package.

If the Final Application Package contains information of sufficient quality and quantity reasonably necessary to support a decision it is ready for final Review and Decision Phase.

If it is determined that the application is incomplete, deficient, or unclear, the application will either be returned, in which case the applicant can reapply at any time, or missing information will be requested from the applicant within a specified limited time frame.

## Review and Decision Phase

The Review and Decision Phase entails the following:

- Detailed final review of the application request;
- Formal consultation with First Nations;
- Development of a draft authorization document; and
- Final decision on the application.

In the Review and Decision Phase ministry staff will assess the information provided in the application package. The applicant may be required to provide additional information about the discharge, waste treatment or potential environmental impact and to resolve outstanding issues that arose from consultation. If the application satisfies the Review and Decision Phase requirements, a draft authorization document will be prepared, with requirements necessary to protect the environment, for director's consideration and decision.

If an authorization is issued, the applicant will receive the authorization document. The authorization is active and the discharge may commence in compliance with the requirements specified in the authorization.

If an authorization is not issued, applicants are invited to comment on or make changes to their application and re-apply at any time.

All application materials and decisions are publicly viewable in AMS.

## Additional Authorization Process Information

### How applications are processed

In order to meet target timelines, ministry staff will focus on processing the oldest applications first. This provides a fair service to our clients, and helps ensure that as many clients as possible receive timely service. In instances where there is a compelling need to evaluate a newer application first (e.g. An authorization amendment will result in improved emissions in a sensitive airshed), ministry staff reserve the right to use discretion when prioritizing applications.

As with any new process, it is possible that wait times may be longer as ministry staff adjust to the new process and clients who applied under the old process are served. The ministry appreciates clients' patience as we transition to this new process, which will help to provide improved service for everyone.

### Assignment of Ministry staff

In order to ensure the fastest service to clients throughout the application process, it is possible that applicants will deal with different staff at different phases in the application process. The ministry is taking efforts to improve our internal documentation related to client files, which will allow us to assign files to first Environmental Protection Officer available, regardless of whether they were involved in the file previously. Because we cannot always predict who will work on any given file at any time, clients are asked to wait until they are contacted by a staff person at each new phase of the process. The ministry has committed to providing clear communication with our clients at each step in the application process so clients know who they can contact when their file is being worked on.

### Application Status Queries

The ministry's website now has an Application Status Query Tool where clients and members of the public can view the status of any application at any time. The data generated by the tool is updated in real time, and users can enter search criteria of interest to them. This is replacing the monthly Application Queues that were previously published by the ministry.

### Still have questions?

If clients have general questions about the authorization process including whether or not an authorization required, and they are unable to find the answer on the ministry's website, they may submit an inquiry via our online service request form, available here:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content?id=7BF7B740DF52491A9E6605CF86E1B2E7>