

Permitting of Development and Infrastructure Projects

What are No Objection Certificates and Environmental Permits?

The Environment Agency—Abu Dhabi (EAD) issues No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for the construction and decommissioning phases of development and infrastructure projects. For development and infrastructure projects with an operational component, EAD also issues environmental permits for operation. The NOCs and environmental permits for operation are designed to ensure that the necessary measures to minimise and mitigate potential environmental impacts are implemented during the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the project.

When is an NOC or permit required?

An NOC must be obtained prior to construction of a new development or infrastructure project or prior to additions or modifications to, or decommissioning of, an existing project. In the case of development projects that do not have an operational component, an environmental permit for operation may not be required after construction has been completed. For all other projects, such as ports, airports, railway systems, sewage treatment plants, power stations, or landfills, an environmental permit must be obtained prior to commencing operation. The NOCs and permits are renewed annually to ensure compliance with the NOC or permit conditions and to ensure that the NOC or permit is updated to reflect the current operations at the project.

Why is it required?

Federal Law No. 24 of 1999 for the Protection and Development of the Environment requires that all projects or establishments obtain a license (i.e., NOC or environmental permit) prior to starting an activity. As the competent authority for implementation of Federal Law No. 24 within the Abu Dhabi Emirate, EAD is responsible for the licensing of development and infrastructure projects.

Who applies for it?

To obtain a NOC for construction/decommissioning or a permit for operation, an environmental permit application should be completed. The permit application should be submitted to EAD during the preliminary design phase of the project to ensure that alternatives can be considered and all required environmental studies can be completed and approved in a timely manner.

What happens next?

Upon submission of the environmental permit application, EAD will review the application and notify the proponent if an environmental assessment is required. Depending on the type and scale of the project, requested studies may include a Preliminary Environmental Review, an Environmental Impact Assessment or Strategic Environmental Assessment, or a Construction or Operating Environmental Management Plan. The environmental study must be completed by an EAD-approved consultant and submitted to EAD for review. Once the study is approved, a NOC for construction/decommissioning or an environmental permit for operation will be issued, at which time the proponent may commence activities on site, subject to the conditions stipulated in the NOC or permit.

To renew a NOC or environmental permit, a request for renewal must be submitted to EAD. If the proponent has provided any requested environmental reports and no violations have been recorded during site inspections, the renewal is usually granted without further action on the part of the proponent. Otherwise, EAD may contact the proponent for more information or conduct an inspection prior to issuing the NOC or permit renewal. If inadequate or no action has been taken to correct violations, the NOC or permit may be revoked or may be conditionally approved pending further corrective action.

Further information?

For further information, refer to the *Standard Operating Procedure for Permitting of Development and Infrastructure Projects in Abu Dhabi*, visit the EAD Web site, or contact EAD Customer Service.