

FOIA Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I submit a FOIA request?

A: Your request must be in writing and must clearly describe the information being sought. Use of the IEMA FOIA form is recommended. You can fax your request to (217) 524-3698 or send in by US Mail, or special carrier, addressed to:

Illinois Emergency Management Agency
Attn: FOIA Officer
1035 Outer Park Dr.
Springfield, IL 62704

Q: What happens after I submit my FOIA request?

A: All requests are processed as received. Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140/3) The Agency will respond within 5 working days of receipt of request or within 21 days for commercial requests as defined by the FOIA. If the requested information is not readily available, a deferral will be sent stating such.

If the FOIA response contains more than 50 pages or multi-media format items, the requestor will be notified and advised of options for viewing or copying the files, these options include:

- Scheduling an on-site review of the records at IEMA Headquarters in Springfield;
- Hiring of a service by the requestor to copy the files; or
- Notification of the copy fees that will be incurred by the requestor. Once payment is received, the requested information will be sent out.

Q: What is the response time for a FOIA request?

The response time for a FOIA request is 5 - 21 business days. Most FOIA responses are provided within 5 business days after receipt of the request. There are provisions for extension of 5 additional days, and by mutual agreement between the requestor and IDNR. For a commercial request, the response time for a FOIA request is 21 business days after receipt of the FOIA request. The amended FOIA defines a FOIA request for a commercial purposes [5 ILCS 140/1 et seq.] in those instances where a use of any part of the public record or records, or information derived from public records, in any form for sale, resale, or solicitation or advertisement for sale or services. Request by news media, non-profit, scientific or academic organizations are generally not considered to be for a commercial purpose.

Q: Is there a charge for records? And, if so, do I send payment with my request?

A: The basic charge for copying black/white documents is \$0.15 per page if more than 50 pages. Color copy or oversize copy [i.e. larger than standard 8 x 11] may involve a greater fee equivalent to the actual commercial cost for reproduction. **Do not send any pre-payment checks with your FOIA request.** If a fee is charged, the Agency will notify the requestor of the charge. Once payment is received the requested information will be sent out. **Payment by credit card or debit card is not allowed.** Payment is required by check or money order payable to "IEMA." **No documents will be sent until receipt of payment.**

Q: Can I submit a FOIA request to automatically receive future records or updates concerning ongoing IEMA programs or conservation projects?

A: No. To obtain future information and/or updates, you must submit a separate FOIA request. However, to avoid excessive fees or duplicate records, you may limit your request scope for documents by date (i.e. "all records for the years of _____ to _____" or "all records since _____"). You should also check the IEMA website for various program/project updates to help focus your requests.

Q: What do I do if I disagree with the denial of my FOIA request?

A: Pursuant to Section 9.5 of the amended FOIA, 5 ILCS 140/3.5, you can file a request for review in writing to the Public Access Coordinator in the Office of the Attorney General no later than 60 days after the denial. The request for review must be signed and include a summary of the facts supporting your allegation of error. These review procedures are further described in Section 9.5[b] through [g], and also in Section 11.5 of the amended FOIA, 5 ILCS 140/9.5 and 11.5 et seq. Any person denied access to inspect or copy any IEMA record may also file for injunctive or declaratory relief before the circuit court for Sangamon County, Illinois, or before the circuit court for the residence of the requestor, as provided in Section 11 of the amended FOIA, 5 ILCS 140/11.