

On-line Permitting Provides State's Contractors with 24-hour Access

E-Government portal site allows Michigan contractors to apply for and receive permits on-line

Charged with issuing permits for contractors across the state, the Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services, Bureau of Construction Codes and Fire Safety (BCCFS) distributes more than 40,000 permits annually. Headquartered in Okemos, a suburb of the state capital, Lansing, the Bureau's jurisdiction reaches across 96,705 square miles. Spreading services throughout this vast area is a large and time-consuming task, particularly in the area of issuing permits.

THE CHALLENGE

The process of applying for and receiving a permit was very cumbersome for contractors, often taking 15 or more working days. The long delay resulted from the fact that applications were mailed-in to the state and then had to be processed manually by BCCFS staff. If there were any errors in the application, it had to be mailed back, fixed by the contractor, and then resubmitted. Even those who opted not to mail-in permitting paperwork often drove between their office, the job site, and the Bureau office to get the application processed—this approach cost the contractor valuable time away from the job site.

Handling all of this paperwork was the responsibility of the BCCFS staff, who quickly found themselves buried in a never-ending stream of applications. At the same time, they had to manage the mounting concerns of contractors frustrated by the lengthy permit process.

THE SOLUTION

Deploying Accela's on-line portal, Accela Citizen Access™, the Bureau provides contractors with 24-hour access to services to apply for, receive, and check the status of permits. Using the Web site, located at www.michigan.gov/bccpermits, licensed contractors can now apply for electrical, mechanical, and plumbing permits in a matter of minutes. The system automatically detects errors, ensuring that the initial application is completed accurately and contractors can pay for permits on-line using a credit card. Even when the permit is approved, the contractor is still not required to go into the Bureau office to get a copy—legal copies of completed permits can be printed directly from the Web site.

Not only are permits processed more quickly with the use of Accela Citizen Access, but the overall building time can be reduced. For example, inspectors in Michigan can not go on-site until a permit number is issued, which can easily take a full week to process manually. With an on-line solution, a permit number can be issued in a matter of minutes, and an inspection can be scheduled immediately—instantly eliminating a week or more of waiting time.

Michigan Department of Information Technology Director Teri Takai commented, "Accela's solution was easy to implement and the benefits of the on-line system were

Customer



Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services, Bureau of Construction Codes and Fire Safety

Population

Serves entire state of Michigan
9,938,444 residents

Location

Okemos, a suburb of the state capital, Lansing

Quote

"Accela's solution was easy to implement and the benefits of the on-line system were instantaneous, both for State of Michigan employees and for the citizens we serve. Citizens are happy since the process is much shorter and we're happy because it's more efficient as employees do not have to spend all of their time processing permits."

Teri Takai
Michigan Department of Information
Technology Director

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Today, contractors registered on the system can access Bureau services at anytime, from anywhere—saving time and money for both contractors and the Bureau. Even applications that are mailed-in are being processed faster because the overall paperwork the staff receives and handles has been decreased. Since the deployment of Accela Citizen Access, the Bureau has seen its permit turnaround time improve from an average of three days to less than one day.

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Dave Viges, Director, BCCFS, Office of Management Services, states that the services provided by Accela Citizen Access can be equal to a full-time staff member. "If the use of Accela Citizen Access maintains the volume it is currently experiencing, it will provide the productivity equivalent to at least one full-time employee."

The system was able to pay for itself within about four months, based on current usage and growth.

"Since the launch of our portal, the Bureau of Codes Construction and Fire Safety is able to process permits immediately, increasing the busy building community's productivity," stated David C. Hollister, Director, Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth. "The elimination of the often lengthy turnaround time helps complete projects on time, enabling new projects to begin more quickly."

In the first 180 days, the Bureau continually increased the number of permits processed on-line, each month processing twice as many permits as the previous month. During 2003, 16.7% of the bureau's electrical, mechanical and plumbing permits were processed on-line.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The end-to-end portal technology allows the Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services, contractors, and citizens with construction projects to save time and money. Processing permits on-line enables the Bureau to provide better, faster service to its citizens while alleviating the staff from an endless trail of permitting tasks.

ABOUT ACCELA

Accela is a leading developer of software and Internet applications for state and local government. With Accela, jurisdictions of all sizes will reduce workload, increase efficiency and automate processes while providing citizens and businesses with more convenient access to government services.

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