

Albuquerque, New Mexico

# Increasing Productivity by Consolidating Data Management

## Lack of Transparency

When Danny Nevarez became the Acting Deputy Director with the City of Albuquerque’s Environmental Health Department Air Quality Division, he had difficulty assessing why the department was not able to meet some of their permit requirements. There were issues with duplicate data across programs being stored in as many as eight different databases and spreadsheets, and a lack of reporting options meant critical information was difficult to access.

Central to the Air Quality Programs’ operations is permitting facilities that produce air pollution; however, a tremendous backlog of pending applications prevented the Division from issuing permits within the legal timeframe. “We had well over 100 pending permits, and we lacked internal communication about their statuses,” says Nevarez.

Additionally, Air Quality was forced to rely on the City’s notoriously slow central accounting system. Vehicle pollution team members were required to drive downtown just to drop off a payment, which frequently took a month or more to process. Often, an emissions testing station would try to purchase emission testing certificates only to find that previous payments hadn’t yet been processed. This was inconvenient for the customer and also meant that the program budget didn’t accurately reflect its real-time financial state. They needed a more transparent solution to increase efficiency.

“Permitting is permitting. You have an owner, you have a facility, you go out and perform inspections and you track compliance. Anyone who is doing permitting, enforcement and compliance – Accela Environmental Health is a perfect fit, no matter what industry you are talking about.”

**Danny Nevarez**

Former Acting Deputy Director



### Population

558,545

### Challenge

A slow and inefficient accounting system made it difficult to process payments, resulting in a huge backlog of pending applications, and extending the processing time for issuing permits.

### Solution

Accela Environmental Health

### Results

Collected \$60,000 in back fees in two years since going live

Reduced number of pending permits by 50%, with 100% of permits issued within the regulated timeframe

Ability to report on permit processing status, employee workload, and overall productivity



# Improved Permitting, Efficiency and Transparency

## How Accela Empowers the City of Albuquerque

Albuquerque's Consumer Health and Business Registration Programs were already using Accela Environmental Health with great success. Having been part of these implementations, Nevarez could see that the Air Quality Permitting and Vehicle Pollution Divisions would benefit from similar consistency. Nevarez felt the solution was the right fit because each Program had standard inspections and permitting tasks. However, some Program leaders felt that air quality permits were too distinctive to be based off a template. Nevarez sat down with them to examine the documents and confirmed that as many as 90% would in fact fit a template.

Leadership began to lean on Nevarez to expand the scope of the project to enforcement, compliance and small business assistance. "Management quickly realized that there was value in transparency. With Accela Environmental Health, we could communicate status, progress and success to all levels of the organization."

## Data Where it Makes a Difference

Each Program team can now use comprehensive reports to create and track financial compliance. And, customers don't have to wait a month for payments to be processed. The solution has enabled the City to setup a standardized collection workflow that automatically generates follow-up letters, mails post-inspection notifications and interfaces with a contracted collections vendor.

Air Quality Permitting Manager Israel Tavarez notes that it's easier to track the financial status of a permit. The Air Quality Division can now refuse customer requests, such as a permit modification, until outstanding fees have been paid. Tavarez estimates the Air Quality Program has collected \$60,000 in back fees in the first two years since going live. "It's been pretty powerful to be able to do that."

## The Bottom Line

Nevarez's favorite benefit is the transparency that comprehensive data management provides. Programs can now run reports that quickly show the permit processing status, employee workloads and overall productivity. The number of permits that are pending is down by 50%, and 100% of permits are now issued within the regulated timeframe. Transparency reports can be automatically emailed to the director and staff to show the current status of every permit. "I can't begin to communicate how big this is. Permittees and the director alike can look at the same report and instantly know where we were in achieving our goals. Permittees can clearly see how their efforts contribute to the overall success of the program."

The transparency that the solution delivers has provided division managers and department leadership the tools to increase revenue, lower pending permit counts, track performance and recognize jobs well done. Says Nevarez, "...now they are tracking their work and more importantly, taking credit for their work."

## About Accela

Accela provides market-leading SaaS solutions that empower governments worldwide to build thriving communities, grow businesses and protect citizens. From planning, building, licensing and permitting, to asset and service request management, environmental health and more, Accela's offerings accelerate efficiency and transparency in governments of all sizes. Powered by Microsoft Azure, Accela's open and flexible technology helps agencies address specific needs today, while ensuring they are prepared for any emerging or complex challenge in the future. Accela is headquartered in San Ramon, California, with additional offices around the world.

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