

State of Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Makes Public Access to Millions of Documents Easy with Workflow and EDM



Organizations transition from paper to electronic processes for a variety of reasons. For some, electronic document management (EDM) is a necessity in order to comply with government and industry regulations. Others make the transition to benefit from instant, secure access to their information. A majority of organizations reduce their paper processes in order to take advantage of automation technologies. In 1996, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) for the State of Delaware's Site Remediation Program had an overriding motivation to transition away from paper: they were overrun with files.

The DNREC has approximately 850 employees who work in five divisions, each of which has multiple programs. N.V. Raman, Manager of Information Systems, recalls, "At the time, we had a lot of files in the Site Remediation Program and we were running out of space. We started looking at EDM systems with the hope that we would be able to scan all of our papers and make them available electronically. We had close to 1.5 million pages in the file drawers. Our plan was to start with incoming documents, then scan our historical pages."

challenge

To increase storage space while at the same time improving access and efficiency by making information available electronically.

solution

The DocFinity® suite of workflow and document management software.

benefits

Immediate electronic access to information, both internally and for the public. The DNREC is also able to improve efficiency by taking advantage of workflow technologies to automate certain procedures. They can send daily notifications to the Public Health Department by pulling scanned PDFs and attaching them to email messages, all without the need for manual oversight.

The DNREC looked at a lot of EDM vendors, ultimately choosing one based on an implementation that impressed them at the State of Pennsylvania—the DocFinity® software suite, by Optical Image Technology, Inc.

Raman explains, "DocFinity allowed us to scan documents and make them available on the Internet. That way, they could be viewed easily—both internally and by the public. Initially, we implemented DocFinity in our Site Remediation Program, where we scanned and made available to the public 1.5 million pages of our contaminated site files. This dramatically reduced the number of requests to review the site files. Instead of making a trip to our office to verify that a property in question wasn't contaminated, the public had the ability to ascertain environmental conditions in their neighborhoods with the click of a mouse."

Eliminating the passing of paper

In 2000, Raman moved from Site Remediation to DNREC's central IT Section. From that vantage point, he considered using DocFinity to increase efficiency in other departments which were plagued by paper. Soon, the Well and Septic programs adopted the EDM system. Michael Townshend, Senior Database Administrator, says, "Our application process previously involved the passing of paper from one desktop to another. Now we use DocFinity to scan all of our permit applications and route them through a homegrown workflow system. They are forwarded electronically for review by engineers and scientists before the relevant permits are issued."



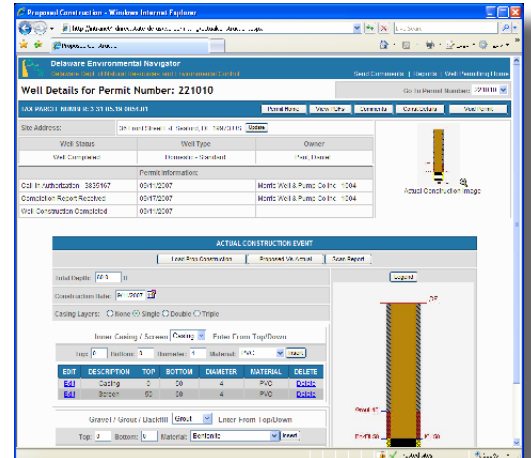
He elaborates, “Applications are received, at which point information is entered into a centralized database. This launches a separate Web browser window that has controls to interact with the scanner. As the pages are scanned, PDFs are created and index files are written. DocFinity Object Importer then imports the information into the database.”

The DNREC also uses the DocFinity importing tool to simplify their boater registration process. Townshend says, “Periodically, we receive CDs from the Fish and Wildlife Department which contain text files and scanned information that pertains to boater registration. Object Importer snags that information and makes it available within our system.”

Using EDM to pass information to other departments

Frequently, other departments within the state have a need to see information that the DNREC has scanned. Townshend explains, “At times, we need to let other departments know when something has happened. Such is the case when applications are made to drill new public wells. Using DocFinity, we are able to automate our daily notifications to the Public Health Department by pulling scanned PDFs and attaching them to email messages. The Public Health Department receives daily updates, and the entire procedure is automated. We schedule jobs within the SQL server, and there is no need for human intervention.”

The DNREC’s Air Quality program has started scanning its files with a view to make them available to the public over the Internet. Throughout the enterprise as a whole, files are scanned to save space as well as to make documents available on the network for easy access by remote staff. In the future, the DNREC anticipates increasing the use of the EDM system in response to requests that are associated with the Freedom of Information Act. Inspection forms and other information that is requested by the public will all be available electronically.



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— N.V. Raman, Manager of Information Systems, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) for the State of Delaware

Easy access

Together, electronic document management and workflow have made the DNREC a much more efficient (and much less cluttered) organization. Raman believes that the greatest benefit of the DocFinity system is the easy access to information that it affords. He summarizes, “Previously, when someone in our Wilmington legal office wanted to view a document, he or she would have to travel to Dover where the paper documents were filed. Now we can access internal information online without having to go to a file drawer. The public can view documents without having to come to our office. And once a document is scanned and archived, we don’t have to look for it ever again.”

To find out more about how EDM and workflow can help your company reduce turnaround time and gain a competitive edge, please contact Optical Image Technology (<http://www.docfinity.com>) at 814.238.0038 or email info@docfinity.com.



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