DENR UNVEILS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY DATA CENTER

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), has launched a data center that provides real-time monitoring of air and water quality, including the status of solid and hazardous waste management, facilities with environmental compliance certificates (ECCs), and online permitting system.

DENR Acting Secretary Jim O. Sampulna said the EMB Data Center unveiled on May 18 provides the most intensive services to "give the public quality environmental data that brings together real-time air, water and even solid waste data from across the country that will certainly empower our citizens to make informed health choices and strengthen the DENR's capability to take immediate action against erring establishments."

Sampulna noted that similar undertakings have been made in other DENR field offices in recent years but were "not as intensive as this one."

He commended the efforts of the DENR-EMB as the funds for the establishment of the P10-million facility came from the savings of the bureau.

According to Stephen Roie Lee, head of the facility's IT team, expenses for the facility's programming and operation would reach almost P100 million if contracted out to a third party.

"This is the kind of leadership and management that I like. You're given 10 and you accomplished much more than 10 pesos," Sampulna said.

DENR-EMB Director William Cuñado said they have pooled together in-house talents of computer programmers both from its main office and regional offices to come up with an integrated

platform for the facility which is housed in a 60-square meter room at the EMB executive building in Quezon City.

The data can be accessed at www.emb.gov.ph

Cuñado said the aggregate and validated data on air, water, and solid waste from all EMB regional offices are housed in the data center to efficiently monitor the compliance of various industries and establishments.

The facility strengthens DENR's push for transparency and good governance as the platform allows for early detection of pollutive activities, as the center is equipped with a notification system which is set off once it records an exceedance in emission from a plant connected to its system.

A self-generated show cause order is sent online to the establishment, giving it 24 hours to explain why it should not face proceedings leading to a possible issuance of a notice of violation.

Other vital information stored in the data center includes online application and processing for wastewater discharge permits along with the names of applicant-firms that have been approved and denied, providing public transparency on the compliance of establishments to the DENR effluent quality standards.

The public can also access data on the status of solid waste management facilities including the materials recovery facilities (MRFs) at the barangay level and 10-year solid waste management plans that have been submitted by local government units (LGUs) to the National Solid Waste Management Commission.

Likewise, accessible from the data center are the location, status, respective capacities of operational sanitary landfills (SLFs) and the corresponding LGUs accommodated by these SLFs.

The DENR-EMB Environmental Monitoring Officers can also upload their reports on "uncleaned or validated cleaned" sites in public areas and report it to the concerned LGUs.

Included in the center's data are the location and testing capabilities of 22 EMB operational laboratories nationwide.

Also shown in the data center are 61 environmental laboratories currently recognized by the DENR through EMB as a measure to augment the capacities of the 22 laboratories to address the increase in the demand for testing.

The location of these DENR-recognized laboratories is shown in the database, including the testing parameters for which they are recognized, expiration dates of their respective DENR recognition certificates, and rates for their testing services in water/wastewater, ambient air and stationary source emissions, sediments and biota, and transformer oil and waste oil. ###