**Section 1800.40 Requirement to Release Performance Bonds**

a) Bond release application.

1) The permittee may file an application with the Department for the release of all or part of a performance bond at any time. The permittee may authorize a person to act on the permittee's behalf. The Department may also initiate an application for bond release. For bond releases initiated by the Department, the Department shall undertake the notification and certification requirements of the applicant under this Section.

2) Within 30 days after an application for bond release has been filed with the Department, the applicant shall submit a copy of an advertisement placed at least once a week for 4 successive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the locality of the surface coal mining operation. The advertisement shall be considered part of any bond release application and shall contain the permit number and approval date, notification of the precise location of the land affected, the number of acres, the type and amount of the bond filed and the portion sought to be released, the type and appropriate dates of reclamation work performed, a description of the results achieved as they relate to the permittee's approved reclamation plan, and the name and address of the Department to which written comments, objections, or requests for public hearings on the specific bond release may be submitted pursuant to subsection (d). In addition, as part of any bond release application, the applicant shall submit copies of letters which he or she has sent to adjoining property owners, local governmental bodies, planning agencies, sewage and water treatment authorities, and water companies in the locality in which the surface coal mining and reclamation operation took place, notifying them of the intention to seek release from the bond. The applicant shall submit a certification of publication for such advertisement prior to the Department's final administrative decision releasing bond.

3) The applicant shall include in the application for bond release a notarized statement which certifies that all applicable reclamation activities have been accomplished in accordance with the requirements of the State Act, the regulatory program and the approved reclamation plan. Such certification shall be submitted for each application or phase of bond release.

b) Inspection by Department.

1) Upon filing of the bond release application, the Department shall, within 30 days, or as soon thereafter as weather conditions permit, conduct an inspection and evaluation of the reclamation work involved. The evaluation shall consider, among other factors, the degree of difficulty to complete any remaining reclamation, whether pollution of surface and subsurface water is occurring, the probability of future occurrence of such pollution, and the estimated cost of abating such pollution. The surface owner, agent, or lessee shall be given notice of such inspection and may participate with the Department in making the bond release inspection. The Department may arrange with the permittee to allow access to the permit area, upon request by any person with an interest in bond release, for the purpose of gathering information relevant to the proceeding.

2) Within the later of 60 days from the filing of the bond release application or 5 days after the expiration of the public comment period provided under subsection (d), if no public hearing is held pursuant to subsection (d), or within 30 days after a public hearing has been held pursuant to subsection (d), the Department shall notify, in writing, the permittee, the municipality and county in which the surface coal mining operation is located, the surety, or other persons with an interest in bond collateral who have requested notification under Section 1800.21(e), and the persons who either filed objections in writing or objectors who were a party to the hearing proceedings, if any, its final administrative decision to release or not to release all or part of the performance bond. The municipality and county shall be notified by certified mail.

c) The Department may release all or part of the bond for the entire permit area or incremental area if the Department is satisfied that all the reclamation or a phase of the reclamation covered by the bond or portion thereof has been accomplished in accordance with the following schedules for reclamation of Phases I, II, and III:

1) At the completion of Phase I, after the operator completes the backfilling, regrading (which includes the replacement of topsoil) and drainage control of a bonded area in accordance with the approved reclamation plan, 60% of the bond or collateral for the applicable area.

2) At the completion of Phase II, after revegetation has been established on the regraded mined lands in accordance with the approved reclamation plan, an additional amount of bond. When determining the amount of bond to be released after successful revegetation has been established, the Department shall retain that amount of bond for the revegetated area which would be sufficient to cover the cost of reestablishing revegetation if completed by a third party and for the period specified for operator responsibility in Section 6.08(d)(2) of the State Act for reestablishing revegetation. No part of the bond or deposit shall be released under this subsection (c)(2) so long as the lands to which the release would be applicable are contributing suspended solids to streamflow or runoff outside the permit area in excess of the requirements set by Section 3.10 of the State Act and by 62 Ill. Adm. Code 1816 or 1817 or until soil productivity for prime farmland has returned to the equivalent levels of yield as nonmined land of the same soil type in the surrounding area under equivalent management practices as determined from the soil survey performed pursuant to Section 2.02(a) of the State Act and 62 Ill. Adm. Code 1823. Where a silt dam is to be retained as a permanent impoundment pursuant to 62 Ill. Adm. Code 1816 or 1817, the Phase II portion of the bond may be released under this subsection so long as provisions for sound future maintenance by the operator or the landowner have been made with the Department.

3) At the completion of Phase III, after the operator has completed successfully all surface coal mining and reclamation activities, the release of the remaining portion of the bond, but not before the expiration of the period specified for operator responsibility in 62 Ill. Adm. Code 1816.116 or 1817.116. However, no bond shall be fully released under this subsection until the reclamation requirements of the State Act and the permit are fully met.

d) Any person with a valid legal interest which might be adversely affected by release of the bond, or the responsible officer or head of any Federal, State, or local governmental agency which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental, social, or economic impact involved in the operation or which is authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards with respect to such operations, shall have the right to file a written request for hearing and written objections to the proposed release from bond with the Department within 30 days after the last publication of the notice required by subsection (a)(2). If written objections are filed and a hearing is requested, the hearing shall be held in accordance with 62 Ill. Adm. Code 1847.9.

e) If the Department disapproves the application for release of the bond or portion of the bond, the Department shall notify the permittee, the surety, and any person with an interest in collateral as provided for in Section 1800.21(e), in writing, stating the reasons for disapproval and recommending corrective actions necessary to secure the release. The permittee, the surety, and any person with an interest in collateral as provided for in Section 1800.21(e) may request an administrative hearing on the disapproval of bond release by filing a request for hearing in accordance with the procedures set forth in 62 Ill. Adm. Code 1847.3.

(Source: Amended at 27 Ill. Reg. 4683, effective March 26, 2003)