

Illinois shakes up Air Team Emissions tests to change with new contract

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Taking your car for its mandatory emissions test will change starting May 1.

That's when the state will reduce the number of facilities from 27 to 17 and add new technology to make the testing quicker.

Some facilities will be by appointment only, and appointments can start being made April 16. Those locations will be listed on the Web site www.IllinoisAirTeam.com.

"We needed to re-configure our network and make it more convenient for people to use," said Maggie Carson, spokeswoman for the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, which oversees the air pollution emissions and testing laws.

As the network of facilities changes in the Chicago and East St. Louis areas, so will the staffing.

Villa Park-based Envirotest Illinois Inc., which has staffed the Air Team since 1986, lost its state contract and will lay off 237 workers by April 30, company spokesman Jim Woodard said.

"The Illinois Vehicle Emission Testing program is one of the best in the nation and is so because of the teamwork between Envirotest, the state and the motoring public," Woodard said.

The winning bidder, Chicago-based Applus Technologies, then will hire 130 of those affected workers. It also will staff an office in Wood Dale.

The new five-year contract has two, 1-year extensions, said Richard Fitzherbert, Applus implementation manager.

"We're in the middle of transitioning over to the facilities now," he said. "These workers have invaluable experience and we're glad to bring them over."

Ten stations will be eliminated, including those in Downers Grove, Palatine, South Elgin and Volo. New ones will be opened in some areas, including Schaumburg.

The closures and other changes will save the state about \$30 million a year, Carson said.

The new testing network will primarily use computerized "on-board diagnostics," also known as OBD testing. OBD tests are faster, more accurate and less expensive than exhaust tests, Carson said.

Here's what the three types of facilities will offer:

- Full-service stations can perform all vehicle inspection services, including idle exhaust tests, gas cap tests, OBD testing and waivers. They will perform tests on all eligible vehicles, including light-duty trucks and older cars that may have to re-test due to a previous failure.
- OBD only stations can perform only OBD tests on vehicles equipped with an on-board computer. Vehicles that are model year 1996 and newer can be tested here.
- Appointment only testing stations can perform OBD tests by appointment only. Appointments can be scheduled by calling (877) 927-7587 beginning April 16.

New Air Team Suburban Air Team car emission testing facilities beginning May 1.

- 425 S. Lombard Road, Addison, OBD only
- 195 Liberty Road, Crystal Lake, full service
- 2450 Landmeier Road, Elk Grove Village, OBD only
- 580 Bond St., Lincolnshire, full service
- 435 Weston Ridge Road, Naperville, full service

- 1671 Mitchell Blvd., Schaumburg, full service (This is a new station scheduled to open May 1)
- 2161 Northwestern Ave., Waukegan, full service

Stations closing May 1

- 5106 Walnut Ave., Downers Grove • 508 S. Hicks Road, Palatine
- 745 Schneider Drive, South Elgin
- 26677 W. Commerce Drive, Volo

Notes: For appointments, call toll-free (877) 927-7587 beginning April 16. OBD means computerized "on-board diagnostic" testing.

Source: Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

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