

PERMITS
[30 U.S.C. 1256]

SEC. 506. (a) No later than eight months from the date on which a State program is approved by the Secretary, pursuant to section 503 of this Act, or no later than eight months from the date on which the Secretary has promulgated a Federal program for a State not having a State program pursuant to section 504 of this Act, no person shall engage in or carry out on lands within a State any surface coal mining operations unless such person has first obtained a permit issued by such State pursuant to an approved State program or by the Secretary pursuant to a Federal program; except a person conducting surface coal mining operations under a permit from the State regulatory authority, issued in accordance with the provisions of section 502 of this Act, may conduct such operations beyond such period if an application for a permit has been filed in accordance with the provisions of this Act, but the initial administrative decision has not been rendered.

(b) All permits issued pursuant to the requirements of this Act shall be issued for a term not to exceed five years: Provided, That if the applicant demonstrates that a specified longer term is reasonably needed to allow the applicant to obtain necessary financing for equipment and the opening of the operation and if the application is full and complete for such specified longer term, the regulatory authority may grant a permit for such longer term. A successor in interest to a permittee who applies for a new permit within thirty days of succeeding to such interest and who is able to obtain the bond coverage of the original permittee may continue surface coal mining and reclamation operations according to the approved mining and reclamation plan of the original permittee until such successor's application is granted or denied.

(c) A permit shall terminate if the permittee has not commenced the surface coal mining operations covered by such permit within three years of the issuance of the permit: Provided, That the regulatory authority may grant reasonable extensions of time upon a showing that such extensions are necessary by reason of litigation precluding such commencement or threatening substantial economic loss to the permittee, or by reason of conditions beyond the control and without the fault or negligence of the permittee: Provided further, That in the case of a coal lease issued under the Federal Mineral Leasing Act, as amended, extensions of time may not extend beyond the period allowed for diligent development in accordance with section 7 of that Act: Provided further, That with respect to coal to be mined for use in a synthetic fuel facility or specific major electric generating facility, the permittee shall be deemed to have commenced surface mining operations at such time as the construction of the synthetic fuel or generating facility is initiated.

(d)(1) Any valid permit issued pursuant to this Act shall carry with it the right of successive renewal upon expiration with respect to areas within the boundaries of the existing permit. The holders of the permit may apply for renewal and such renewal shall be issued (provided that on application for renewal the burden shall be on the opponents of renewal), subsequent to fulfillment of the public notice requirements of sections 513 and 514 unless it is established that and written findings by the regulatory authority are made that -

(A) the terms and conditions of the existing permit are not being satisfactorily met;

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(B) the present surface coal mining and reclamation operation is not in compliance with the environmental protection standards of this Act and the approved State plan or Federal program pursuant to this Act; or

(C) the renewal requested substantially jeopardizes the operator's continuing responsibility on existing permit areas;

(D) the operator has not provided evidence that the performance bond in effect for said operation will continue in full force and effect for any renewal requested in such application as well as any additional bond the regulatory authority might require pursuant to section 509; or

(E) any additional revised or updated information required by the regulatory authority has not been provided. Prior to the approval of any renewal of permit the regulatory authority shall provide notice to the appropriate public authorities.

(2) If an application for renewal of a valid permit includes a proposal to extend the mining operation beyond the boundaries authorized in the existing permit, the portion of the application for renewal of a valid permit which addresses any new land areas shall be subject to the full standards applicable to new applications under this Act: Provided, however, That if the surface coal mining operations authorized by a permit issued pursuant to this Act were not subject to the standards contained in section 510(b)(5)(A) and (B) by reason of complying with the proviso of section 510(b)(5), then the portion of the application for renewal of the permit which addresses any new land areas previously identified in the reclamation plan submitted pursuant to section 508 shall not be subject to the standards contained in section 510(b)(5)(A) and (B).

(3) Any permit renewal shall be for a term not to exceed the period of the original permit established by this Act. Application for permit renewal shall be made at least one hundred and twenty days prior to the expiration of the valid permit.