

COST OF COPIES — Fees for Copies of Departmental Public Records

For several years we have been trying to get the cost of copies for public documents at TDEC reduced. Over the years the price has risen to \$0.50 per page, which we feel is a barrier to public participation, and in violation of federal rules which apply to all federal, state, and local agencies carrying out various federal environmental acts. The rules found in 40 CFR Part 25 describe public participation requirements, include:

"Copying facilities at reasonable costs... Whenever possible, agencies shall provide copies of documents of interest to the public free of charge. Charges for copies should not exceed prevailing commercial copying costs."

The effort increased in July of 1999 with nineteen (19) groups joining PEER in a sign-on letter to EPA protesting the price policy. With great leadership from the Tennessee Clean Water Network and the Tennessee Conservation Voters organizations, and assistance for some of TDEC's responsible staff, TDEC finally agreed to change the policy.

Commissioner Hamilton announced the signing of a new rule in February 2001 that will soon go into effect, making the price of copies as low as \$0.10 per page or even free for public interests. We and the public greatly appreciate this effort by the state to improve public access and participation.