**Section 1848.16 Powers of Hearing Officers**

Hearing Officers shall be licensed to practice law in the State of Illinois and not be employed by the Department. Hearing officers may:

a) Administer oaths and affirmations;

b) Issue subpoenas;

c) Issue appropriate orders relating to discovery;

d) Rule on procedural requests or similar matters;

e) Hold conferences for settlement or simplification of the issues;

f) Regulate the course of the hearing;

g) Rule on offers of proof and receive relevant evidence;

h) Where applicable, conduct site inspections of the land to be affected or where the surface coal mining and reclamation operations are located;

i) Enter appropriate orders;

j) Examine witnesses and direct witnesses to testify, limit the number of times any witness may testify and limit repetitive or cumulative testimony;

k) Take other actions authorized by these regulations or by the Surface Coal Mining Land Conservation and Reclamation Act (Ill. Rev. Stat. 1991, ch. 96 1/2, par. 7901.01 et seq.) [225 ILCS 720].