

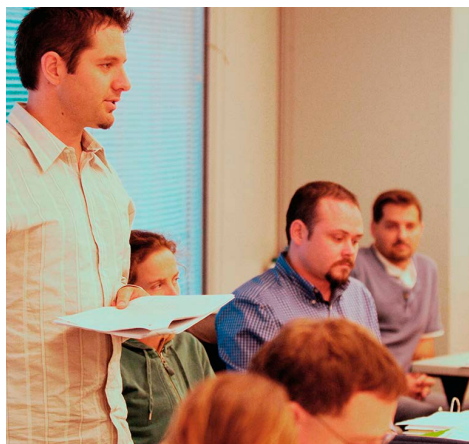
Operator Certification Bulletin | Fall 2013

Drinking Water and Wastewater Operator Certification News

For more news or information please visit
www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater or www.owwco.ca

DID YOU KNOW...?

Drinking Water Operator Training Requirements



Continuing Education

Continuing education is now recognized by most professions and certification programs as an integral part of maintaining a certification. The benefits of on-going continuing education for career development and enhanced productivity have been widely documented.

One of the key recommendations of the Walkerton Inquiry was to ensure operators complete continuing education on a regular basis. As a result, new training requirements for drinking water operators were introduced in 2005.

The regulatory changes placed the responsibility for completing the

training with both the operator and the owner or operating authority:

- The operator must complete the number of hours of training during the three year period of their certificate to be eligible for a renewal.
- The owner or operating authority shall take reasonable steps to ensure every operator employed in the drinking water system completes the annual hours of training in each of the three years for which the operator's certificate is valid.

Temporary Certificates

There are provisions under the program to allow the Director to issue a "temporary" renewal certificate in the event the training has not been completed and the Director is satisfied that the operator will do so before the expiry of the certificate. **However, even if the Director issues a temporary renewal certificate, the owner or operating authority may be deemed to be out of compliance with the regulation as a result of failing to take reasonable steps to ensure that the operator**

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completed the required training within the three year period that the certificate was valid.

The Director has the authority to refuse a temporary certificate if he/she is not satisfied with the reason for the failure to complete the training, or if he/she is not satisfied the operator will complete the training before the expiry date of the temporary certificate. If the Director refuses to issue the temporary certificate, the operator will not hold a

valid certificate and therefore cannot be allowed to operate in a drinking water system, until the training is complete and the certificate is renewed.

Failing to complete the required training as a result of poor record keeping or failure to schedule the required training is not acceptable.

To help ensure that operators, owners and operating authorities meet regulatory operator training requirements, both owners and operators are encouraged to review their record keeping and scheduling practices regularly so that training can be completed in a timely way.

For further information, please visit www.owwco.ca.

2013 Operator Survey Results

In August, operators were invited to participate in OWWCO's anonymous online survey to give their feedback about customer service, including response times, service quality, accessibility to program information, bi-annual operator bulletins and more. A total of 1056 operators responded.

Below are the average ratings for some of the questions that were asked:

- 79% of respondents rated the accessibility of OWWCO's customer service desk as "good" or "excellent";
- 84% of respondents said that their information requests are "always" or "most often" answered within a reasonable timeframe;
- 76% of respondents indicated that they have "excellent" or "good" working relationships with OWWCO;
- 93% of respondents have visited OWWCO's website and 83% of them find the information they need either "always" or "most of the time";



- 55% of respondents read the bi-annual operator bulletins. 95% of respondents who read bulletins admitted to reading some, most or all of its content and rated the overall quality of the bulletin an average of 7.8 out of 10.

Operators also provided a lot of feedback about their information needs, their interactions with OWWCO staff, available resources and suggestions to improve services. OWWCO is using this input to identify how best to enhance service delivery and strive towards continuous improvement. For example:

- Questions/concerns raised by operators are an important factor when determining topics to be included in operator education resources and outreach events;
- Operator feedback is also taken into consideration during reviews of OWWCO procedures to determine where improvements can be made.

OWWCO thanks all operators who took the time to respond to the survey.

Job Postings – Where to find them

Many operators who responded to OWWCO's customer service survey last August had indicated their interest in getting information about job postings in the Operator Certification Bulletin.

Several organizations post operator job advertisements on their websites. Below are a few suggestions and links to their employment pages:

- Ontario Water and Wastewater Association:
www.owwa.ca/careers/job-postings
- Ontario Municipal Water Association:
www.omwa.org/index.php?id=36

- Ontario Clean Water Agency:
www.ocwa.com/en/careers_overview
- Water Environment Association of Ontario:
www.weao.org/careers



Also, many municipalities post job opportunities exclusively on their own websites, typically in the Careers or Employment sections. To access links to all municipal websites, visit the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) at www.amo.on.ca/YLG.

Preparing for Exams

In response to several comments received from OWWCO's customer service survey, the ministry made improvements to the "Preparing for Exams" landing page on the Drinking Water Ontario website to help operators prepare for exams.

You can easily access information about recommended study guides and manuals that are relevant to each exam,

and how to order them. Links to need-to-know exam criteria, which are available at no cost, are also listed for each type of exam.

Visit www.ene.gov.on.ca/environment/dwo/en/responsibilities/STDPROD_096044 for more information.

Recent Disciplinary Measures

Operators play a key role in safeguarding drinking water across the province. The strength of Ontario's drinking water safety net relies heavily on operators' skills, experience, performance and ethical behaviour.

Holding a wastewater licence or drinking water certificate grants operators a right to operate in Ontario and, through reciprocity agreements, allows the certificates to be transferred to most provinces in Canada. With this right comes a responsibility. Operators are expected follow all applicable laws and to act honestly, competently and with integrity with a view to ensuring the protection of the public.

If an operator fails to meet these requirements, the ministry is authorized to take action to revoke or suspend an operator's certificate.

Earlier this year, three operator certificates were revoked and two other certificates were suspended for a three year period.

While instances of unethical behaviour tend to be rare, disciplinary actions are necessary to help ensure that public health is protected, and that the integrity of the operator certification program is maintained.

Operator	Action	Rationale
#1*	Revocation: Class II Water Distribution and Supply Certificate	Knowingly providing false information to a provincial officer; repeatedly failing to report adverse test results.
#2*	Suspension for 3 years: Class I Water Distribution and Supply Certificate	Failing to report two adverse results (low chlorine residuals) while designated as Overall Responsible Operator.
#3*	Suspension for 3 years: Class II Water Distribution and Supply Certificate	Failing to report three adverse results (low chlorine residuals) while designated as Overall Responsible Operator.
#4	Revoked: Class I Water Treatment Certificate	Repeatedly failing to take chlorine residual samples and falsifying logs.
#5	Revoked: Class II Water Treatment and Class I Water Distribution and Supply Certificates	Repeatedly failing to take chlorine residual samples and falsifying logs.

*In addition to the revocation and suspensions described above, the operators were convicted under the Safe Drinking Water Act and fined between \$4,500 and \$15,000.

The ABC and Ontario's Operator Certification Program

The Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) is a North American organization with members in 48 US states and nine Canadian provinces, including Ontario. Members are typically government departments and licensing boards which have regulatory authority to issue operator licenses and certificates.

One of the ABC's main objectives is to promote certification as a means of protecting public health and

the environment by advancing the quality and integrity of environmental certification programs. They do this by promoting uniformity of standards and best practices, and by providing services to their members to improve each jurisdiction's certification programs.

Ontario has been a full member of the ABC since 1987. Our existing operator certification model was adopted from the ABC. Today, Ontario uses ABC's examinations and/or exam questions



to help ensure greater standardization within Canada. In addition, the ABC provides Ontario with testing services, support materials and expertise from across North America.

To learn more about the ABC, visit www.abccert.org.

Ontario Certification Working Group – Topics at their meeting in June 2013

The Operator Certification Working Group (OCWG) represents various and diverse organizations in the water and wastewater industry. They play an important role with the operator certification program by offering expert advice to the Ministry of the Environment and helping to ensure that operators, operating authorities and other stakeholder organizations are kept informed about program requirements.

The OCWG meets 3-4 times annually to discuss issues affecting operator certification and operators' concerns. Below are some of the key topics they discussed at their meeting on June 18th, 2013:

- Discussions on On-the-Job Practical Training and Continuing Education Guidelines
- Outcomes of the drinking water operator renewal pilot project

- Preliminary results from OWWA's survey of municipalities on Overall Responsible Operators
- Plans to revise the Entry Level Drinking Water Operator Course and suggested topics for the next mandatory renewal course
- Changes for Operator-in-Training exams held at municipal sites
- Updates from WEAO on their Wastewater Operator Training Advisory Committee
- OWWCO's Customer Service Statistics Report

For more information about the OCWG and highlights of previous meetings, visit OWWCO's site and follow the link under Resources.

WHAT'S COMING UP?

Operator-in-Training Exam Location Changes

Last year the ministry initiated a review of the Operator-in-Training (OIT) exam process. The review was a result of a number of breaches of examination procedures at municipal administered exams. In consultation with the Operator Certification Working Group, a number of options were considered.

As a result of the review, the ministry will be discontinuing OIT exams at municipal or operating authority sites as of April 1, 2014. As of that date, all OIT exams must be written at an Ontario Water Wastewater Certification Office examination site. Note that colleges may continue to provide OIT exams as part of their regular diploma programs.

The number of exam sessions will increase across the province, starting in 2014, to help ensure that all operators have access to exam sessions. Eleven new examination sites will be available, making it easier for OIT and leveled examinees to schedule an examination. The new proposed examination sites include Hamilton,



London, Welland, North Bay, GTA East, Orillia, Peterborough, Kingston, Ottawa/Kemptville, Thunder Bay, and Timmins.

In special circumstances the ministry will work with municipalities to deliver OIT exams outside of regular scheduled sessions. Arrangements could be made for operators in very remote communities, or as a result of an unplanned operator shortage.

Also, starting April 1, 2014, OIT exams may be scheduled in the morning and afternoon. Currently they are only scheduled in the afternoon.

Exam dates and locations are posted at www.owwco.ca. For more details or information, please contact OWWCO.

Upcoming Conferences and Industry Events in Ontario

Event	Presented By	Date	Location
Annual Conference on Stormwater and Urban Water Systems Modeling www.chiwater.com/Training/Conferences/conferencetoronto.asp	Computational Hydraulics Int'l.	Feb. 26 – 27	Toronto
49th Central Canadian Symposium on Water Quality Research – Making the Pieces Fit: Facing Water Quality Challenges Together www.cwwa.ca/WastewaterConference_e.asp	CWWA/CAWQ	Mar. 5 – 7	Burlington
15th Annual OOWA Conference and Trade Show www.oowa.org/conference	OOWA	Mar. 23 – 25	Niagara Falls
TRIECA 2014 Conference http://www.trieca.com/	Toronto & Region CA and the Int'l Erosion Control Assn.	Mar. 25 – 26	Brampton
43rd Annual WEAO Technical Symposium and OPCEA Exhibition www.weao.org/annual-conference	WEAO	Apr. 6 – 8	London

CWWA: Canadian Water and Wastewater Association

CAWQ: Canadian Association on Water Quality

OOWA: Ontario Onsite Wastewater Association

WEAO: Water Environment Association of Ontario

REMINDERS

Five Year Exam Validity Policy

To qualify for a certificate, an operator or water quality analyst (WQA) must pass a certification exam. Exams are normally written when an operator has the qualifications to be certified/licensed, such as the experience and continuing education unit (CEU) requirements. However, an operator or WQA may choose to write an exam before meeting these requirements.

It's important to remember that the results of a passed exam are valid for five years. If you do not meet the experience and continuing education requirements within that period, you will have to re-write the exam to qualify for a certificate/licence.

This policy has no impact on operators renewing valid operator certificates/licences.

Remember!

However, to get a certificate or licence reissued after it has expired, you will need a valid exam result if:

- your drinking water certificate has expired for more than one year
- your wastewater licence has expired for more than 5 years

Guideline 3.11 Exam Result Validity explains this policy in greater detail and is available at www.ene.gov.on.ca/stdprodconsume/groups/lr/@ene/@resources/documents/resource/std01_086690.pdf.

Keep Your WWOCS Profile Updated



Is your contact information up to date in WWOCS (Water and Wastewater Operator Certification System)? Login to WWOCS at www.lrcsde.lrc.gov.on.ca/wwocs_web to check it out. Remember to keep your email information current to receive notices about future Operator Certification eBulletins.

If you don't have access to WWOCS, send a completed request form to OWWCO by mail or fax. Request forms and WWOCS user guides for operators and trainers are available on OWWCO's [website](#).

OWWCO's Website: Your One-stop Information Portal

Remember to visit OWWCO's website for all your certification information needs. If you want to know how to renew or upgrade your certificate/licence, want to check when exams are scheduled, or need a ministry form or guidance document, visit www.owwco.ca.

Sign up to receive email updates about certification news, events and updates on OWWCO's website at <http://s214598728.onlinehome.us/subscribe.htm>.

