BECOMING A CERTIFIED WASTEWATER OPERATOR IN UTAH

STATE OF UTAH
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY
Revised 2012

That's it! Please call the Wastewater Operator Certification Program (801) 536-4344 or the Division of Water Quality (801) 536-4300 if you have questions. We may also be contacted by mail or though the web site at http://www.waterquality.utah.gov/OpCert. Good luck on your next exam!!

In March 1991, following 20 plus years of a voluntary certification program, certification of wastewater works operators became mandatory. This booklet is compiled in an effort to answer questions most often asked by operators and is a supplement to the Rule for Certification of Wastewater Works Operators (R317-10). If you would like a copy of the Rule, it is available on our web site. If you have questions not answered by this booklet, please contact the Wastewater Operator Certification Program at the address below:

Wastewater Operator Certification Program
DEQ/Division of Water Quality
PO Box 144870
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4870

(801) 536-4344 or (801) 536-4300

Our office is located in the
Multi Agency State Office Building, DEQ 3rd Floor
195 North 1950 West
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116

wwopcert@utah.gov

Operator Certification at
http://www.waterquality.utah.gov

ELIGIBILITY FOR WASTEWATER OPERATOR CERTIFICATION

To obtain regular certification, an operator must:

- ☑ Comply with the education and experience requirements for the certification grade for which the application is being made,
- ☑ File a properly completed application for the certification examination with the Wastewater Operator Certification Program by the application deadline,
- ☑ Pay the exam fee, and
- ☑ Achieve a passing score on the certification examination (70% or higher).
- ☑ Meet the residency requirement as set forth by HB 81 which went into effect July 1, 2009.

Not every operator is required to be certified under the mandatory certification law. Chief operators and supervisors who make process decisions for the system and are designated to be in direct responsible charge must be certified at the level of the facility classification. All other operators in direct responsible charge must be certified at no less than one grade lower than the facility classification or at the lowest possible classification in the case of grade I facilities.

GRANDFATHER CERTIFICATES (CONT.)

Some Notes:

- Grandfather certificates are issued only to operators who are required to be certified by law, not to everyone who isn't currently certified.
- If your wastewater works adds a new process (for example, chlorination or primary clarifiers) your grandfather certificate may no longer be valid.
- A grandfather certificate only certifies you at the wastewater works where you were employed on and before March 16, 1991. If you change jobs, you will no longer be certified.
- A grandfather certificate is valid for three years, and renewal does require accrual of Continuing Education Units (CEUs), submittal of a renewal application, and payment of the renewal fee.
- If the grandfather certificate is not renewed prior to the expiration date, the wastewater works may be considered to be out of compliance. The operator would then be required to pass the appropriate certification examination to become a certified operator.

CERTIFICATION WITHOUT EXAMINATION
(The grandfather clause)

*You must have applied for initial certification under this program before **12/31/94** to be considered eligible for a grandfather certificate.*

You can obtain a grandfather certificate which is valid only at the wastewater works at which you are employed if you meet the following criteria:

You are a chief operator or person having direct responsible charge

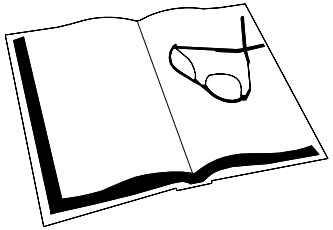
and

You have worked at that wastewater works for at least ten years prior to March 16, 1991

and

You demonstrate to the Certification Council that you are capable of operating that wastewater works by sending them a copy of your employment history and references.

A FEW DEFINITIONS



Facility classifications are specified in the rules (Utah Administrative Code R317-10) and are too lengthy to include here. However, for collection and wastewater treatment operators there are four (4) grades that correspond to the facility classification. In addition, for operators of small lagoon systems serving fewer than 3,500 people, who usually maintain both the Class I lagoon and the Class I collection system, there is only one (1) grade that combines treatment and collection. If the system changes classifications, operators are required to obtain certifications corresponding to the new classification.

Direct responsible charge (DRC) as defined in the rule, means "active on-site charge and performance of operation duties." Generally, direct responsible charge is taken by the chief operator or shift supervisors; however a night shift operator or one who works as the sole operator will also have direct responsible charge of the system as they independently make decisions affecting system processes.

Restricted Certificate means a certificate issued when an operator passes a certification exam, but doesn't meet all the other requirements (experience or education) to be certified at that grade.

EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

- All certification grades require twelve years of education (high school diploma or equivalency); **however**, experience may be substituted for education.
- A limited amount of relevant education, beyond a high school education or graduate equivalence degree can be substituted for experience for grades II through IV.
- For all grades, a graduate equivalence degree is valid in lieu of a high school diploma.
- Training classes are not required prior to taking the certification examinations, but they are available and may be helpful.

For example,

Wastewater Operator Certification Program
DEQ/Division of Water Quality
PO Box 144870
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4870

Dear Council:

The Anyplace Sewer District is sponsoring a CPR/First Aid training course on Sept.1, 20__. The relevant details are as follows:

Name of course: *CPR/First Aid training course*

Sponsor: *Utah Chapter of the Red Cross*

Instructor: *John Smith, EMT - Red Cross trainer*

Subjects to be covered: Basic first aid, CPR techniques to include: first aid in treating burns, abrasions, fractures, differing types of wounds in addition to CPR techniques

Time allotment: 6 hour course; 3 hrs. of first aid, 3 hrs. of CPR

Other: Exam will be given at end of training; certification cards will be issued upon successful completion of exam

Please review and assign appropriate CEUs. If you require any additional information, please feel free to call.

Sincerely,

John Doe
Anyplace Sewer District

CRITERIA FOR TRAINING COURSES

Any training courses, seminars, etc., should be pre-approved by the Certification Council for CEUs to be awarded. Pre-approval may be obtained by submitting a letter to the Certification Council which includes the following:

1. Name of course, subject(s) to be covered, and sponsor(s).

2. An outline or agenda of the training course.

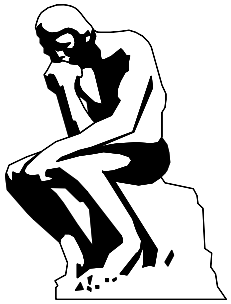
3. List the instructor(s) and qualifications for teaching the course.

4. Time involvement for each subject covered. (Minimum 1 hour wastewater related training for any individual to receive credit)

5. Is an exam offered at the end of the course?

After the training is held, a follow-up letter listing the attendees should be forwarded to the Division of Water Quality, Wastewater Operator Certification Program, so that the CEUs can be credited to each individual.

CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION



APPLYING FOR THE EXAMINATION

Examinations are usually given in Spring and Fall.

Call or write the Wastewater Operator Certification Program at the phone number, address, or web site listed at the beginning of this booklet. An application will be sent to you.

Complete the application and return it with the fee to the same address. After your application has been processed, it will be placed on file. Check the web site or call our office to verify your registration.

PROBLEMS

Should you fail the exam, you may come into the Division of Water Quality offices at 195 North 1950 West, Salt Lake City (or other scheduled location), to review your test within 30 days. **You need to make an appointment.** You may challenge any exam question, but individual scores will not be changed. However, if an error has been made in grading the exam, everyone who correctly responded to incorrectly graded question will be given credit. In addition, every effort will be made to work with the testing agency to improve poorly-worded questions for the next exam.

EXAMINATION FEES
Fees are charged for the examination, but only to cover the cost of the testing service. The cost is specified on the application form.

SPECIAL CASES
Some operators know how to operate a plant but have difficulty passing a written exam. In certain instances the Certification Council will allow an oral examination.

WHO?
Anyone may take any examination. However, the operator will not be qualified as a certified operator until all the conditions of the certificate are met. In other words, a "restricted" certificate will be issued.

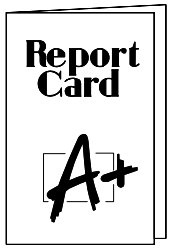
RECIPROCAL CERTIFICATION

If you are certified in another state, planning on working in Utah, and would like to be certified, call or write and request an application stating your situation. If the other state has equivalent standards to Utah, the Certification Council may grant you certification after reviewing your application. A fee will be charged for your certificate by reciprocity.

If you are working in another state at the time of application and your application is approved, you will be sent a letter of intent to issue a certificate by reciprocity. When you begin working in Utah, provide proof of your employment to our office along with a copy of your current valid certificate from the other state, and you will be issued the certificate.

CONTINUING EDUCATION (CEU) REQUIREMENTS

- Continuing education is required to maintain your wastewater certificate. For grades I and II, 2 CEUs are required for renewal. For grades III and IV, 3 CEUs are necessary.
- Required CEUs must be earned during the 3 year period prior to the expiration date of the certificate.
- All CEUs are subject to review and approval to ensure that the training is related to the duties of a wastewater operator.
- Credit for a single training experience may be counted towards multiple certificates only if it is applicable to each type of certification.
- No more than one-half of the required CEUs for renewal can be earned through attendance at the annual technical program meetings of RWAU, WEAU, WEF, or similar organizations.
- It is recommended that at least one-half of the required CEUs be technical training directly related to the job duties for each certificate.
- The minimum credit that will be entered into the certification database is 0.1 CEUs. Credit will be given for actual training time over that minimum for each training event (which may consist of multiple topics.) Generally, 1 hour of specialized training = 0.1 CEU (policy revised February 1, 2011.)



CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS (CEUs)

There are a lot of ways to get continuing education units in order to renew your certificate.

Rural Water Association of Utah (RWAU) holds seminars throughout the state for water and wastewater operator training. Some of these classes (i.e., pumps or safety) may also count as CEUs for wastewater.

There are correspondence courses available through California State University at Sacramento (CSUS) and other providers.

Attending professional conferences may count toward your required CEUs.

In-house training may also be used if it is approved.

Training is also available through the Professional Wastewater Operators (PWO) of the Water Environment Association of Utah (WEAU).

Training obtained through RWAU, PWO, and WEAU are generally submitted directly to the Division of Water Quality for credit. In order to get pre-approval for other training, see the next section (Criteria for Training Courses).

CERTIFICATES

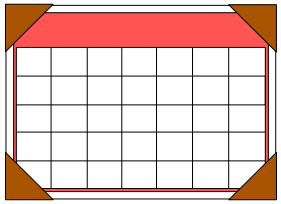
Certificates are issued for the following categories:

- Wastewater Treatment Operator - Grades I through IV
- Restricted Wastewater Treatment Operator - Grades I through IV

- Wastewater Collection System Operator - Grades I through IV
- Restricted Wastewater Collection System Operator - Grades I through IV

- Small Lagoon System Operator - Grade I - Wastewater Treatment/Collection System combined
- Restricted Small Lagoon System Operator - Grade I Wastewater Treatment/Collection System combined

- Grandfather certificates are for a specific facility at the classification and grade at which it existed on March 16, 1991. If the facility changes process or classification, the operator would be required to acquire the new certification through examination. Only renewal certificates may be issued now.



AFTER YOU ARE CERTIFIED

Certificates are valid for up to three years and must be renewed by December 31 of the year they expire. A renewal notice may be sent to you approximately four months prior to expiration, but if you don't receive one please call the Wastewater Certification Program. **You are responsible for renewing your certificate.**

CERTIFICATE RENEWAL

In order to renew your certificate you must:

- Keep up your continuing education units;
- Earn the required CEUs prior to the expiration date;
- Submit completed renewal application prior to expiration;
- Submit the required Citizenship / Alien ID Certification Form with copy of Photo ID
- Submit the renewal fee prior to expiration.

PLEASE !!! LET US KNOW IF:

- You change systems, employers, DRC status;
- You change your mailing address; or
- You change your name due to marriage or court order.

CERTIFICATE UPGRADE

If you would like to upgrade your certificate, all you need to do is call our office for an examination application, complete it and send it back with the appropriate fee. Once you verify you are registered for the correct exam and the test date, location, and time, you just need to --

PASS ANOTHER TEST!

CHANGE OF STATUS – RESTRICTED TO UNRESTRICTED

If you were issued a "restricted" certificate, but now meet all the education and/or experience requirements for your particular certification, you may submit a completed application, along with the appropriate fee, and an "unrestricted" certificate will be issued.

CERTIFICATE REINSTATEMENT

Expired certificates may be reinstated only during the ***one year*** immediately following expiration. In order to reinstate your expired certificate you must:

- Accumulate the required continuing education units *prior* to certificate expiration;
- Submit the completed renewal application within ***one year*** of expiration;
- Submit the appropriate renewal *and* reinstatement fee within ***one year*** of expiration.