

Operator Certification (Revised 05/2018)

The regulations for drinking water operator certification can be found at:
<ftp://www.ilga.gov/JCAR/AdminCode/035/03500681sections.html>

The information that follows is simply an outline discussing the certification process. The regulations supersede any information in this document.

Drinking water operator certification is critical for the protection of public health and the maintenance of safe, optimal, and reliable operations of water treatment and distribution facilities. In order to safeguard the health and well being of the populace, every community water supply in Illinois must have on its operational staff at least one person “certified” as competent as a water supply operator under the provisions of the Public Water Supply Operations Act.

Illinois EPA Assistance

Any questions concerning operator certification can be directed to:

Illinois EPA – Operator Certification
BOW/CAS #19
1021 North Grand Avenue East
P.O. Box 19276
Springfield, IL 62794-9276
Telephone: 217-785-0561
Fax 217-782-0075

The Illinois EPA maintains a website designed for both drinking water and waste water operators. An operator can now perform the following tasks via the Internet:
<http://dataservices.epa.illinois.gov/operatorcertification/Anonymous/Search.aspx>

- Update personal information such as address, place of employment, email address, etc.;
- Manage/update training credit hours for drinking water certification renewal and,
- Search approved training courses and training providers.

To begin using the operator certification application, you must first register. For instructions on registration, please read *Appendix C*.

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Operator Certification Information and Forms:

<http://www.epa.illinois.gov/topics/drinking-water/operator-certification/index>

Facility Classification

Community Water Supply (CWS) facilities are classified as follows:

A **Class A CWS** means any surface water CWS and any CWS that includes coagulation, sedimentation, lime softening, ultraviolet disinfection or membrane filtration as a part of the primary treatment process.

A **Class B CWS** means any CWS that includes filtration (other than membrane filtration), aeration and filtration, or ion exchange equipment as a part of the primary treatment process.

A **Class C CWS** means any CWS that includes chemical feeding as a part of the treatment process.

A **Class D CWS** means any CWS that has pumpage, storage, or distribution of water.

A "**water supply operator**" is defined as any individual trained in the treatment or distribution of water who has practical working knowledge of the chemical, biological, and physical sciences essential to the practical mechanics of water treatment or distribution and who is capable of conducting and maintaining the water treatment or distribution processes in a manner which will provide safe, potable water for human consumption.

Every part of a CWS in Illinois, other than an exempt CWS, must be under the direct supervision of a properly certified water supply operator. The classification level of an individual the CWS is required to employ is dependent on the complexity of the water treatment process. For example, all surface water systems' treatment processes involve coagulation, sedimentation, and possibly lime softening, as a part of its primary treatment process. Therefore, all surface water systems in Illinois must employ at least one individual with a Class A certification.

An "**exempt**" CWS is defined as any CWS that **meets all** the following requirements:

- (1) consists only of distribution and storage facilities and does not have any collection and treatment facilities;
- (2) obtains all its water from, but is not owned or operated by, a community water supply that is required to employ a Class A, Class B, Class C, or Class D community water supply operator;
- (3) does not sell water to any person; and
- (4) is not a carrier that conveys passengers in interstate commerce.

A CWS may hire an operator that has a “higher” certification level to operate a less complicated treatment process. However, a CWS may not hire an operator of a lower certification level to operate a more complicated treatment process. For example, a CWS may hire a Class A, B, C, or D operator to run/oversee a system which includes only storage and distribution of water. A CWS cannot hire a Class C operator to run/oversee treatment that involves ion exchange. An ion exchange treatment process requires oversight of a Class B certified operator. A CWS may employ multiple operators of different classification levels; however, at least one operator must meet the minimum certification requirements to oversee operations.

To become certified in Illinois, a person **must first pass a written examination** and then meet minimum experience requirements for each classification. There are four levels of certification:

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| Class “A” Certification |
| A "Class A" Water Supply Operator Certificate shall be issued to those persons who demonstrate the necessary skills, knowledge, ability, and judgment of the chemical, biological, and physical sciences essential to the practical mechanics of coagulation, sedimentation, lime softening, ultraviolet disinfection, or membrane filtration, chemical feed, calculation of dosage, and distribution in a manner which will provide safe, potable water for human consumption. This includes experience with pathogen removal/inactivation related treatment processes. All surface water facilities and ground water under the direct influence of surface water require a Class A operator. The operators will also demonstrate the necessary skills, knowledge, ability, and judgment of the treatment processes outlined under “Class B”, “Class C”, and “Class D” certification. |
| <p><u>Education and Experience</u> Certificates require graduation from high school* or equivalent (GED) and not less than 5340 hours of acceptable study, training, and responsible experience in Class A water supply operation or management.</p> |

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|---|
| Class “B” Certification |
| A "Class B" Water Supply Operator Certificate shall be issued to those persons who demonstrate the necessary skills, knowledge, ability, and judgment of the chemical, biological, and physical sciences essential to the practical mechanics of filtration, (other than membrane filtration), aeration and filtration, or ion exchange systems, chemical feed, calculation of dosage, and distribution in a manner which will provide safe, potable water for human consumption. The operators will also demonstrate the necessary skills, knowledge, ability, and judgment of the treatment processes outlined under “Class C” and “Class D” certification. |

Education and Experience

Certificates require graduation from high school* or equivalent (GED) and not less than 5340 hours of acceptable study, training, and responsible experience in Class B water supply operation or management.

Class “C” Certification

A "Class C" Water Supply Operator Certificate shall be issued to those persons who demonstrate the necessary skills, knowledge, ability, and judgment of the chemical, biological, and physical sciences essential to the practical mechanics of chemical feeding, calculation of dosage and distribution in a manner which will provide safe, potable water for human consumption. The operators will also demonstrate the necessary skills, knowledge, ability, and judgment of the treatment processes outlined under “Class D” certification.

Education and Experience

Class "C" Water Supply Operator Certificates require graduation from high school* or the equivalent (GED) and not less than 1780 hours of acceptable study, training, and responsible experience in Class C water supply operation or management.

Class “D” Certification

A "Class D" Water Supply Operator Certificate shall be issued to those persons who demonstrate the necessary skills, knowledge, ability, and judgment of the chemical, biological, and physical sciences essential to the practical mechanics of pumpage, storage, and distribution in a manner which will provide safe, potable water for human consumption.

Education and Experience

Class "D" Water Supply Operator Certificates require graduation from high school* or equivalent (GED) and not less than 890 hours of acceptable study, training, and responsible experience in Class D water supply operation or management

**The requirement for graduation from high school or the equivalent shall be waived for CWS operators certified prior to July 9, 1999.*

Every CWS operator certified by the Illinois EPA shall be capable of performing his or her duties without endangering the health and well being of the consumers; shall be able to read and write English; and shall produce evidence acceptable to the Illinois EPA as to his or her character and his or her ability to maintain and operate properly the structures and equipment entrusted to the operator's care.

Responsible Operator in Charge (ROINC)

Every CWS must employ a certified operator with the appropriate classification level. Responsible Charge means “active, on-site charge or performance of operation of the treatment plant or distribution system of a public water supply or comparable water supply”. The Owner or Administrative Contact (defined as any person who owns, leases, controls, or supervises a community water supply) of a CWS is required to appoint an operator of appropriate classification “in responsible charge” or “ROINC” to run and oversee daily water treatment and distribution operations. The ROINC is carbon copied on most Illinois EPA correspondence sent to the CWS. The ROINC may have limited signature authority (i.e., signing monthly operational reports, signing sample collection forms, sample site plans, issuing boil orders, etc.). The ROINC does not have signature authority for Violation Notice (VN) related enforcement documents or construction/operational permits UNLESS he/she is also designated as Official Custodian or Administrative Contact.

The ROINC is responsible for submitting consumer confidence reports, monthly operating reports, and drinking water compliance monitoring reports, such as corrosion control reports and monitoring results.

A CWS may choose to employ more than one ROINC. In this case, one ROINC may oversee the water treatment process while another may oversee the distribution system. For example, a surface water system must employ a Class A operator (and designate them as treatment ROINC) to oversee the treatment process, but in addition, can employ a second operator with any level of certification to serve as the distribution system (no treatment) ROINC.

The Owner, Official Custodian, or Administrative Contact must complete a “Notification of Responsible Operational Personnel” form when adding or replacing ROINCs. This form can be found in *Appendix A* of this Chapter or at:

<http://www.epa.illinois.gov/Assets/iepa/forms/water-quality/drinking-water/operator/notification-of-ownership.pdf>

Contract Operators

A CWS may satisfy operator requirements by contracting the services of a certified operator of the required class (or higher). A CWS that employs a contract operator must have a written contract. As of August 1, 2012, any new/revised contract must be approved by the Illinois EPA and meet the requirements specified in *Appendix E*. Contracts existing prior to August 1, 2012 will be reviewed by an Illinois EPA Regional Field Inspector during the CWS routine engineering evaluation. Existing

contracts must meet all conditions listed in *Appendix E*. Please refer to *Appendix E* for the requirements.

Meeting the Experience Requirements for Certification

The Public Water Supply Operations Act (the Act) is the Law that gives the Illinois EPA the authority to administer and enforce the Water Supply Operator Certification Regulations. The Act can be found at: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=1593&ChapterID=36>

Water supply operating experience is a key part of the Act. The Act calls for a minimum of half the total experience of an operator to be in “responsible experience” of a public water supply. This is defined as follows:

- “Responsible” means “Active, on-site charge and/or performance of operation of the treatment plant or distribution system of a public water supply or comparable water supply system.”
- “Hands-on” means the knowledge acquired from daily operating experience rather than from text book study or supervisory observation. It means the applicant has actually operated a water plant or water supply or worked on the distribution system and has performed tasks including but not limited to, routine tests, sample collection, completion of operational reports, etc.

Under the Act, an operator certified as competent by the Illinois EPA is capable of performing duties without endangering the health and well being of the populous. To determine this competency, the Illinois EPA must evaluate whether the operator “has the ability to maintain and operate properly the structures and equipment entrusted to his care”. The Law specifically designates four requirements for evaluation of competency.

1. The ability to read and write English.
2. Evidence acceptable to the Agency as to character and applicable experience.
3. Successful completion of a written examination.
4. A minimum education level.

In evaluating applications for certification, a minimum of one-half of the total time required for certification must be hands-on experience with the processes that define the facility classification. Up to one-half of the total experience required may be comprised of equivalent experience credit. Equivalent experience credit can be in the form of seminars, short courses, and applicable correspondence courses or a baccalaureate degree in some curriculum associated with a phase of water supply operation.

Character/experience as defined by the Illinois EPA refers to the letter of verification and the three character references required in the application. The letter of verification (see page 11) should be written by the operator's supervisor, water commissioner, or another village official. The person giving verification must be able to attest to the operator's competency in the waterworks field, include dates of employment as a water supply operator, and a listing of the routine duties performed or the process-control decisions made by the applicant.

Operator Certification Written Examinations

An individual can request to take any one of the four certification exams (A, B, C, or D) prior to completing the hands-on-experience requirements (see "Eligibility Requirements for Examination" on page 9). Any person who wishes to take the water supply operator examination must submit a "Drinking Water Operator Certification Examination Request" to the Illinois EPA at least 30 days prior to the examination date. Instructions and the request form can be found at: <http://www.epa.illinois.gov/Assets/iepa/forms/water-quality/drinking-water/operator/dw-op-cert-exam-request.pdf>

All questions must be answered on the examination request form and the request form must be signed before any decision regarding exam eligibility will be issued. The examination request must be accompanied by a non-refundable exam fee of **\$10**.

The Illinois EPA shall review an examination request and shall determine a person's eligibility on the basis of the information contained in the request within 30 days of receipt of the request, unless that deadline is waived by the applicant. If the Illinois EPA determines a person is eligible to take the water supply operator examination, the requestor will be sent a **Letter of Admission (LOA)**. Each LOA shall be valid for one examination conducted within one year of the date of issuance. If the LOA expires, the applicant must submit another examination request form and the \$10 examination fee and the Illinois EPA will issue a new LOA. If the Illinois EPA determines a person is not eligible to take the water supply operator examination, the Illinois EPA will send written notice explaining the decision.

Any person who does not agree with the Illinois EPA's determination of his or her eligibility to take the water supply operator examination may make a written request to the Illinois EPA that the Advisory Board review the Illinois EPA's eligibility determination. The Advisory Board shall review the examination request and shall make a recommendation to the Illinois EPA for reconsideration or confirmation of the Illinois EPA determination.

Eligibility Requirements for Examination

Any person who meets the following requirements shall be eligible to take a water supply operator examination:

- 1) The applicant is able to read and write English;
- 2) The applicant has submitted evidence of his or her character; and

- 3) The applicant has paid the required \$10 fee.

Any person who has had or has been exposed to typhoid fever or amoebic dysentery will be required to demonstrate that they are not a carrier. If the person is a carrier, that person will not be allowed to take the water supply operator examination.

Examination

The purpose of the water operator examination of competency is to test a person's skills, knowledge, ability and judgement of the chemical, biological and physical sciences essential to the treatment of drinking water, as well as the person's ability to read and write English.

Examinations shall be administered at various locations throughout the State as determined by the Agency.

No person shall take the operator exam more than four times in one calendar year unless the person passed an exam. If a person has taken the C exam four times in a calendar year and passes the exam on the fourth attempt they may then submit a request for examination for the A or B exam. They may then attempt the A or B exam within the same calendar year.

The maximum time for the exam is five hours, unless a request for a reasonable accommodation has been received and approved by the Agency in writing prior to the beginning of the examination.

Any person may submit a request for reasonable accommodation for an eligible disability under the Americans With Disability Act and the Illinois Human Rights Act.

Examination Admission

A person who has received an LOA must schedule the examination at least seven days prior to the examination. The Applicant must specify the level of the exam they wish to attempt at the time of scheduling. The Illinois EPA shall provide instructions for scheduling the examination with the LOA. Each person with an LOA will be admitted to one water supply operator examination. **The LOA and one state government issued photo ID must be presented to the examination proctor to take the examination (you will not be allowed to test without either).** The operator may also want to bring a calculator (non-programmable and incapable of storing alphanumeric data). **No cell phones or any type of recording devices are allowed in the testing center.**

Examination Results

The Illinois EPA will send each person who takes the water supply examination notification of whether the person obtained a passing score. The passing score for each examination shall be 70 percent of the points available.

Reexamination

An individual who fails a written examination must submit a new request for examination, <http://www.epa.illinois.gov/Assets/iepa/forms/water-quality/drinking-water/operator/dw-op-cert-exam-request.pdf>

pay the examination fee, and obtain a new LOA before scheduling/retaking the examination. The Illinois EPA will issue an LOA for an examination once the new examination request and non-refundable fee of \$10 is received (please allow 15 days for processing).

Operator in Training (OIT) Classification

Any person who passes the water supply operator examination shall be considered an **“Operator in Training” (OIT)** for the class of examination passed. The Illinois EPA's notification of a passing score on a water supply operator examination shall constitute evidence that the person is an OIT.

A person may hold a Certificate of Competency for one class of certification and be an OIT for a higher class of certification.

There are no **renewal training requirements** for persons who hold only an OIT. The OIT classification is valid for six years. If the OIT has not obtained full certification after 6 years for the class of examination passed, the exam process must be started over. An OIT certificate cannot be renewed.

As mentioned previously, the Owner or Administrative Contact of a CWS is required to appoint an operator of appropriate classification “in responsible charge” or “ROINC” to run and oversee daily water treatment and distribution operations. An operator with only OIT status **cannot** fulfill this requirement.

Application for Certification

Once an operator has passed the written examination and meets the hands-on experience eligibility requirements for certification, the next step is submitting an **“Application for Certification as a Community Water Supply Operator”** to the Illinois EPA along with a **\$30.00** application review fee. Please note that this fee is non-refundable

The **“Application for Certification as a Community Water Supply Operator”** is on the web at:

<http://www.epa.illinois.gov/Assets/iepa/forms/water-quality/drinking-water/operator/cws-op-cert-application.pdf>

To help an operator satisfy the experience requirements, the certification program allows up to 1780 hours of credit for non-college course works and up to 2670 hours for work leading up to a College degree (for a Baccalaureate Degree in a curriculum associated with a phase of water supply operation). However, this credit can never exceed one-half of actual “hands-on” experience.

Example

An operator has completed 3560 hours of coursework at the Environmental Resource Training Center (ERTC) in water treatment. If the operator was applying for a Class “A” certificate, this education may count up to 1780 hours (maximum allowed) of the 5340 hours experience and training needed (the remaining 3560 hours must come from “hands-on” experience). Likewise, if the same operator was applying for a Class “D” certificate, this education may count up to 445 hours (cannot exceed one-half of actual hands-on training) of the 890 hours of the experience and training needed (the remaining 445 hours must come from “hands-on” experience).

Letter of Verification

To confirm “hands-on” experience has been met, the applicant must include a **Letter of Verification** with the application from a current or past employer(s) verifying the “hands-on” water treatment experience. This letter must be prepared by a water supply official, and must contain that official’s signature and contact information. The letter must completely describe the duties performed as a water supply operator and/or as a distribution system operator, including the amount of time spent per week acquiring “hands-on” experience. The letter must also include the date the applicant began employment and ended employment if applicable. To receive credit for any previous water treatment “hands-on” employment experience, the applicant must have a similar letter of verification from each of the previous employers which includes employment dates, a description of job duties, and a signature. If a proper Letter of Verification is not submitted, or if required information is not included in the letter the applicant will not receive credit for that time.

Once the application review is completed and it has been determined that the applicant meets all eligibility requirements, the Illinois EPA will issue by mail a *Certificate of Competency* for the Certification Class. **The certificate will be valid for up to three years.**

If an applicant does not agree with the Illinois EPA’s determination of the applicant’s experience qualifications, they may write to the Illinois EPA and request that the application be presented to the Advisory Board for its review and recommendations (see Advisory Board, page 21 of this Chapter). The Advisory Board shall review the applications and shall make a recommendation to the Agency for reconsideration, or confirmation of the Illinois EPA’s determination.

Certificate Renewal and Expiration

Certificates must be renewed every three years. Operators must obtain a specified amount of training in order to qualify for certificate renewal. **Class A and Class B** operators are required to obtain **30** renewal training credit (RTC) hours and **Class C and Class D** operators are required to obtain **15** RTC hours before the certificate expiration date.

Around March 31st of the year a certificate is due to expire, the Illinois EPA will mail a **Renewal Application Form (RAF)** to the operator. The RAF shall specify the certificate expiration date, fees due, training requirements for certificate renewal, and an itemization of the completed training on file

with the Illinois EPA.

The RAF must be completed, signed and returned along with a \$10.00 non-refundable renewal fee to the Illinois EPA on or before June 30th. If the operator misses the June 30th deadline, a 30-day grace period will automatically be given. In this case, the operator will have until August 1st to submit the RAF and the \$10.00 renewal fee. If the RAF is received on or after August 1st, an additional \$10.00 restoration fee will be assessed (to make the total fee \$20.00).

Failure to meet the June 30th renewal date will result in expiration of the operator's current class certificate. In this case, the operator will no longer be recognized by the Illinois EPA as being certified. The certification will be expired until the training requirements are fulfilled, the completed renewal application received, the renewal and restoration fee is paid, and a new card is issued by the Illinois EPA.

The Illinois EPA will not process RAFs that are not signed by the operators seeking renewal. Falsification of a RAF shall result in denial of certificate renewal and/or certificate revocation. Failure to receive the renewal application from the Illinois EPA does not exempt a certified water supply operator from meeting the June 30th deadline.

If an operator is short RTC hours by the certification expiration date, the operator will have 2 years from the expiration date to complete the needed training, submit the RAF, and pay the \$20 renewal/restoration fee. It is important to note though, the certification will remain expired until the conditions stated above are met and a new certification card is issued. A restored certificate expires on the original certificate expiration date.

| <i>Example</i> |
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| Joe Smith's certification for Class B operator expired July 1, 2011. As of June 30, 2011, he has 28 hours of renewal credit training hours (needs 30 hours). On July 1, 2011, his certificate expired. On January 5, 2012, he completed 4 hours of renewal credit training hours. Joe then contacts the Illinois EPA in writing to renew his Class B certification. Joe must then submit a \$10.00 renewal fee, \$10.00 restoration fee (\$20.00 total), and the Renewal Application Form. For the 2 hours he is missing, he must submit the training provider name, name of course or training event, training description or course content summary, drinking water related competencies developed or maintained, location of training, dates of training (beginning and ending), and total training hours completed. No exam is needed. Please note that once renewed, the certification period will still be the July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2014 period, <u>BUT the effective date will be the date he receives the wallet card/acknowledgement</u> of renewed certification from the Illinois EPA. The Illinois EPA will not recognize Joe's certificate as valid during July 1, 2011 through the date of our acknowledgement of renewed certification. |

An individual whose certificate has been expired for **two (2) or more** years must submit an application for examination, retest, obtain a passing score on the examination, and reapply for certification in order to be certified as a water supply operator.

In an extreme hardship case, the Illinois EPA may grant a waiver from the renewal training requirement when it is demonstrated and documented that it was impossible for an operator to obtain the required training. Examples of extreme hardship may include serious medical conditions or extended military service. Individuals applying for a training waiver must provide the Illinois EPA with a written request for an Advisory Board review within two years of the certificate expiration date.

Summary of Certification Events

| Event | When | |
|---|---|--|
| Individual must submit “Drinking Water Operator Certification Examination Request” | At least <u>30 days</u> prior to the examination date Fee \$10 | |
| Illinois EPA will send Letter of Admission (LOA) or denial | Within 30 day of receipt | |
| Once operator receives Letter of Admission, individual must call testing center for reservation | At least 7 days in advance of testing day | |
| Bring: -LOA -Photo Identification -Calculator (non-programmable and incapable of storing alphanumeric data) | Day of testing **NO CELL PHONES** | |
| Receive Operator in Training (OIT) status (pass/fail letter) <i>Good for six years</i> | 21 days after testing with passing grade (=>70%) | |
| After OIT obtains hands-on experience operator submits application for certification (+ <i>Letter of verification from employer</i>) (+ <i>Minimum of three references</i>) | Within 6 years of passing exam Fee \$30 | |
| If Illinois EPA approves application, Certificate of Competency issued certification expires 3 years later (July 1 st) | N/A | |
| Continued educational training now required for renewal 30 RTC hours for Class A and B Operator 15 RTC hours for Class C and D Operator | Every 3 Years | |
| Illinois EPA Renewal Application Form sent | Around March 31 st of Expiration Year | |
| Operator completes and returns renewal application form | By June 30 th of expiration year | Renewal fee \$10.00 |
| Renewal form returned late (current certificate expired) | Between 7/1 and 7/31 | Grace period, renewal fee still only \$10.00 |
| Renewal form returned late (current certificate expired) | After 7/31 | Renewal fee \$10.00 restoration fee: <u>\$10.00</u> \$20.00 |
| Renewed certificate issued | Within 45 days | N/A |

Acceptable Training for Certificate Renewal

Certified drinking water operators are required to obtain the following specified amount of training in order to qualify for certificate renewal:

- 1) Class A and Class B operators are required to obtain **30 hours** of training before the certificate expiration date. A minimum of **20 hours** of training must relate to the technical aspects of water treatment and distribution. The Illinois EPA will accept a maximum of **10 hours** of training relating to the non-technical professional responsibilities of the operator and to safety.

- 2) Class C and Class D operators are required to obtain **15 hours** of training before the certificate expiration date. A minimum of **10 hours** of training must relate to the technical aspects of water treatment and distribution. The Illinois EPA will accept a maximum of **5 hours** of training relating to the non-technical professional responsibilities of the operator and to safety.

Note: A Class A or Class B operator who fails to complete the 30 hours of renewal training, but completes 15 hours of renewal training shall not be granted a renewal Certificate of Competency as a Class C or D operator.

Training Topics – Technical Aspects

Allowable training topics relating to potable water treatment and distribution include, but are not limited to:

- Coagulation and Flocculation
- Corrosion Control
- Demineralization
- Disinfection
- Distribution System
- Distribution System Facilities
- Drinking Water Permits, Laws, Rules and Regulations
- Drinking Water Related Computer Courses
- Electrical Maintenance
- Filtration
- Fluoridation
- Ground Water Protection
- Ground Water Treatment
- Instrumentation
- Iron and Manganese Control
- Laboratory Procedures
- Membrane Technology
- Process Waste Handling and Disposal
- Pumps and Hydraulics
- Reservoir Management and Intake Structures

Reverse Osmosis
 Sampling and Operating Reports
 SCADA Training
 Sedimentation
 Surface Water Protection
 Surface Water Treatment
 Taste and Odor Control
 Trihalomethanes
 Water Quality
 Water Softening
 Water Sources & Treatment
 Water Storage Facilities
 Water Supply Math and Chemistry Calculations
 Water Supply Operation and Maintenance
 Wells

Training Topics – Professional Responsibilities - Non-Technical Aspects

Allowable training topics relating to the professional responsibilities of the operator and safety include, but are not limited to:

Computer Workshops
 Emergency Planning and Preparation
 First Aid
 Safety
 Utility Administration Management

Training Exclusions The following are not considered training for the purpose of meeting the certificate renewal training requirements

- Entertainment or recreational activities;
- On the job work or apprenticeships;
- Personal self-improvement courses;
- Plant tours (unless drinking water related training is integrated into the tour);
- Portions of meetings and conferences when drinking water related training is not provided (i.e., business session, lunch, breaks, etc.);
- Time spent viewing conference/meeting exhibits; and
- Travel time to and from training activities

Training may be provided by any of the variety of organizations equipped to provide such training, such as colleges and universities, technical institutes, educational units of governmental or industrial agencies, professional operator organizations, and equipment suppliers and manufacturers. Training that meets the criteria, regardless of the location of the training or training provider, is allowed for renewal training credit.

Acceptable training formats include classroom courses, teleconferences, courses offered via the Internet, workshops, seminars, correspondence courses, in-house training programs, and drinking

water related training sessions at conferences/meetings of professional operator organizations. Training credit is also allowed for teachers or presenters of training for the first time a course is taught or a drinking water related presentation is made.

Training courses should be pre-approved by the Illinois EPA before the training is offered. All training courses approved will be assigned an Illinois EPA course number.

Approval for Training – Training Providers

Training providers can contact the Illinois EPA to register on-line and have their courses approved on-line as well (normally within days). Go to:

<http://dataservices.epa.illinois.gov/operatorcertification/opcertwelcome.aspx>

If Internet access is not available, course approval may be requested by submitting a “**Training Provider Form**” prior to the training event. This form is also available on the web at:

<http://www.epa.illinois.gov/Assets/iepa/forms/water-quality/drinking-water/operator/operator-training-provider-application.pdf>

Appendix D provides instructions on navigating the OpCert web site and includes the “Training Provider Form”. Training providers should request course approval a minimum of 10 days in advance of training. Upon Illinois EPA approval, the training provider will receive a course/event identification (ID) number by email confirmation. **At the beginning of the course/event, the instructor should give this ID number to the attending trainees.** The trainee should keep this course ID number and record it on any documents submitted to the Illinois EPA. Operators should verify that classes are Illinois EPA approved for training credit BEFORE attending or paying registration fees. Please contact the Operator Certification Coordinator at 217-785-0561 for any questions concerning registration online and the approval process.

Drinking water related training from another state will be allowed for credit provided the above criteria are met. In-house training programs provided at drinking water supplies are also allowed for training credit provided all training criteria are met and proof (course ID number) of training documentation is provided to the trainees.

Meetings and Conferences of Professional Operator Organizations

Operators may receive training credit for certificate renewal by attending sessions presented at meetings and conferences of professional operator organizations. In order to receive training credit, each training session attended during a meeting or conference must be added to the operators training credit records. Each operator can add his or her training credit hours online at: <http://dataservices.epa.illinois.gov/operatorcertification/opcertwelcome.aspx>

More information including instructions for online entry can be found in *Appendix C*.

If an operator does not have access to the Internet, they may submit via U.S. Mail an “**Operator**

Training Submission Form” (see *Appendix C*) listing the courses attended.

Please remember, conference/meeting providers should get **prior** Illinois EPA confirmation/approval for a meeting or conference. In most cases, a conference is a reoccurring event, prior to each time the event is held, Illinois EPA approval is needed since the agenda/speakers will change.

College Course Credit

Quarter hours or semester hours are usually assigned for courses offered by colleges and universities. For the purpose of calculating actual classroom hours for **renewal training credit**, the following conversions should be used:

1 Semester Hour = 15 hours of training credit

1 Quarter Hour = 10 hours of training credit.

Submission of Training Hours

Operators can manage and update training credit hours for their drinking water certification renewal online at: <http://dataservices.epa.illinois.gov/operatorcertification/opcertwelcome.aspx>

Those who manage their training credit hours online are **not** required to submit hard-copy training forms to Illinois EPA unless they are specifically requested. Please read *Appendix C* for web site instructions.

Operators that do not have access to the Internet may submit completed training for renewal credit to the Illinois EPA using **Operator Training Submission Forms** (*Appendix C*) or something comparable. Submission of training hours must occur prior to certificate renewal. **Operators must include the course ID number when submitting training documents to the Illinois EPA to receive credit (training documents will be returned if the course ID is missing).** If the operator does not have a course ID number, they should contact the training provider and request the course ID number. If the course has not been approved, the training provider should submit the necessary paperwork for course approval as discussed on the previous page.

The operator is responsible for documenting accumulated training hours as described under “Certificate Renewal and Expiration”.

Operator Obligations - Proof of Training Records, Record Keeping, Audits

Operators are required to maintain their own proof of training records for a period of six (6) years from the date of the training. The Illinois EPA may audit proof of training records by random selection or when additional information is required. Failure to provide proof of training documentation when specifically requested by the Agency may result in denial of certificate renewal, denial of certificate restoration, or certificate revocation. Proof of training records must include:

- a) Records showing the name of the course or training activity, course ID number, name of the training provider, instructor's or speaker's name, location of training, dates of training, and total training hours completed (specified actual hours, Continuing Education Units, or Quarter Hours/Semester Hours);
- b) A program/course out-line, conference/meeting agenda, or narrative summary of training;
- c) Attendance verification records, such as completion certificates, diplomas, grade slips, registration payment receipts, or other documents to verify attendance for training where official documents are provided, or name, address, and telephone number of training provider where official documents are not provided.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity applies to operators seeking Illinois certification who would like to use the certification obtained in another state as experience/justification for Illinois certification. The Illinois EPA may grant water supply operators certified by another state, territory or possession of the United States, or any other country, reciprocal certification in Illinois without examination provided all requirements are met.

An individual seeking reciprocity must submit the following:

- 1) the “Application for Reciprocity Certification as a Community Water Supply Operator” <http://www.epa.illinois.gov/Assets/iepa/forms/water-quality/drinking-water/operator/cws-op-cert-reciprocity-application.pdf> along with a \$30 application review fee, and a \$10 reciprocal certificate of competency fee;
- 2) indicate the classification of Illinois certification for which the application is being made;
- 3) evidence that the certificate issued by the other certifying jurisdiction is in good standing and has not expired.

By signing the Application for Reciprocity, the applicant gives the Illinois EPA permission to contact the certifying authority which issued the applicant's current certificate. This will enable the Illinois EPA to:

- determine the qualifications which the applicant was required to meet to become certified;
- confirm whether or not the certificate is in good standing; and
- obtain a representative copy of the regulations and examination of the certifying authority for comparison with Illinois' regulations and examinations.

The Illinois EPA may grant reciprocal certification to a water supply operator trained by the United States as a member of the United States Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps or Navy without examination. A water operator seeking reciprocity under this section must submit the following:

- 1) the “Application for Reciprocity Certification as a Community Water Supply Operator” <http://www.epa.illinois.gov/Assets/iepa/forms/water-quality/drinking-water/operator/cws-op-cert-reciprocity-application.pdf> along with a \$30 application review fee, and a \$10 reciprocal certificate of competency fee;
- 2) a detailed description of qualifications, training and jobs performed while in the U.S. Armed Forces; and
- 3) a copy of his or her performance records.

By signing the Application for Reciprocity, the applicant gives the Illinois EPA permission to contact the U.S. Armed Forces to enable the Agency to verify the information submitted in the application.

Reciprocity Determination

An applicant for a Class A, Class B, Class C or Class D Certificate of Competency who possesses a valid certificate issued under the laws of another certifying jurisdiction will be issued an Illinois Certificate of Competency, without examination, provided:

- 1) The Illinois EPA may determine by reviewing the other certifying jurisdiction's requirements that the applicant has met minimum standards equivalent to or more stringent than the standards specified in the Illinois EPA regulations for Water Supply Operator Certification prior to receiving the certificate from the other certifying jurisdiction.
- 2) The other certifying jurisdiction that issued the certificate to the applicant accepts, by reciprocity, certificates issued by the Illinois EPA.
- 3) The applicant resides in Illinois or is employed at a public water supply in Illinois.

An applicant satisfying (1) and (2) above, but failing to meet the residency requirements of (3), shall be issued a notice of intent to grant reciprocity. The applicant must submit proof of Illinois residency or employment at a public water supply in Illinois within 90 days after the issuance of the notice of intent. Upon receipt of such proof, the Illinois EPA shall issue an Illinois Certificate of Competency. Should that applicant fail to submit proof of the requirements in (3) within 90 days after issuance of the notice, the notice of intent shall become void.

Applications for reciprocity described above shall be reviewed by the Illinois EPA as follows:

- 1) The Illinois EPA shall review each applicant's education and experience to determine the levels of certification for which the applicant is eligible.
- 2) The Illinois EPA shall contact the certifying officials from the other certifying jurisdiction to determine the level of certification of the applicant for reciprocity and whether the certificate is currently valid.
- 3) The Illinois EPA Agency shall compare the applicant's qualifications and the other certifying jurisdiction's eligibility requirements to determine appropriate level of certification; if so, reciprocity shall be granted at the appropriate level.
- 4) If it is determined that reciprocity should be granted, the Illinois EPA shall issue the appropriate class of Certificate of Competency to the applicant and shall notify a certifying official from the other certifying jurisdiction.

- 5) If it is determined that reciprocity should not be granted, the Illinois EPA shall notify the applicant, and provide reasons for the decision.

If a Certificate of Competency that has been issued through reciprocity is suspended or revoked, the Illinois EPA shall notify a certifying official from the other certifying jurisdiction.

An applicant who is denied reciprocity or who is given a lower level of certification than the one requested shall have an opportunity for a hearing with the Advisory Board. The Advisory Board shall review the determination and provide a recommendation to the Illinois EPA.

The Illinois EPA shall consider the Advisory Board's recommendation and notify the applicant in writing of the Agency's final decision within 45 days after the receipt of the Advisory Board's recommendation. This decision is appealable to the Illinois Pollution Control Board.

Operator ID Numbers

In the past, the operator's ID number was their social security number. This is no longer the case. The Illinois EPA will assign a random identification (ID) number to each operator who is certified or applies to take a water operators certification exam. This number should be recorded on all documents submitted to the Illinois EPA. An operator's social security number should never be recorded on any forms or documents submitted to the Illinois EPA. Most Illinois EPA certification related correspondence sent to the operator will include the operator's ID number.

Operator Certification Advisory Board

The operator certification advisory board assists in the formulation and review of the policies of the Illinois EPA Operator Certification Program. In addition, the Advisory Board will make recommendations and provide the Illinois EPA with technical advice and assistance as needed.

The Advisory Board consists of the Illinois EPA Director (or representative) and five other members appointed by the Governor. The five appointed members are persons having an active interest and wide background in water supply management and operation from a practical and technical standpoint. The Advisory Board meets at least once a year.

In matters dealing with operator sanctions, the Advisory Board shall be notified of the hearing. A copy of the hearing transcript shall be sent to the operator and to the Advisory Board. The Advisory Board shall make a recommendation based on the hearing transcript whether sanction is appropriate.

The Advisory Board also has the authority to review contested Illinois EPA reciprocity determinations. The Advisory Board must provide applicants who are denied reciprocity with an opportunity to appear before the Board. The Advisory Board shall review the decision to deny reciprocity and must provide a recommendation to the Agency.

Contesting Illinois EPA Renewal, Restoration, and Training Determinations

Operators, training providers, and training sponsors may contest Illinois EPA determinations regarding denial of certificate renewal or restoration, denial of training credit, and determinations regarding the amount of training credit to be awarded for a specific training event. Contested Illinois EPA determinations will be forwarded to the Advisory Board for recommendation. Individuals contesting an Illinois EPA determination must provide the Agency with a written request for an Advisory Board review within 30 days of the Illinois EPA determination. The written request shall state the name and address of the individual, the Illinois EPA determination being contested, and any information to support the individual's position. For more information concerning contesting Illinois EPA determinations, please contact the Operator Certification Coordinator at 217-785-0561.

Administrative Citation

The Responsible Operator in Charge (ROINC) for each community Water Supply is responsible for submitting, in accordance with Board Rules, consumer confidence reports, monthly operating reports and drinking water compliance monitoring reports; such as monitoring results and corrosion control reports. If it is found that an operator has violated these requirements the Illinois EPA may issue an Administrative Citation within 90 days of discovery of the violation. The citation may equal a civil penalty of up to \$500 for each violation of the provision, and up to \$1500 for any second or subsequent violation.

Operator Sanctions

Certification shall be subject to sanctions of revocation or suspension upon a showing of cause by a preponderance of the evidence. Such sanctions shall not be a bar to any civil or criminal proceedings. Causes for sanction shall include but are not limited to:

- a) having obtained, renewed or restored, or attempted to obtain, renew or restore, a Certificate of Competency by fraud or deceit;
- b) any gross negligence, misconduct, or incompetency in the operation of a public water supply;
- c) falsification of reports required to be submitted to the Illinois EPA;
- d) willful violation of the Environmental Protection Act or any rules there under; or
- e) a final judgment in a civil action or a conviction in a criminal action that the operator has performed any of the acts listed in subsections (a) through (d) above.

If the Illinois EPA determines that a sanction procedure is warranted, either based on a valid complaint or on its own motion, it shall notify the operator by certified mail.

For more information concerning Operator Sanctions, please contact the Operator Certification Coordinator at 217-785-0561.