

CHANGES TO THE OPERATOR CERTIFICATION RULE

The Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) has repealed the rule entitled Water Treatment Plant Operator Certification consisting of the Louisiana Administrative Code (LAC), Title 48, Part V, Sections 7301 through 7335 (LAC 48:V.7301-7335). DHH has adopted a new rule entitled Water and Wastewater Operator Certification consisting of LAC 48:V.7301-7339. The new rule states, "The Operator of any public water system or any community sewerage system shall hold current and valid professional certification(s) of the required category(s) at or above the level required for the total system and individual facility." Key elements of the new Operator Certification Rule are presented below.

Applicability

This rule applies to publicly and privately owned facilities, commercial facilities, and industrial facilities.

Date the Rule is Effective

April 1, 2002

Levels of Certification

<u>Population Served</u>	<u>Facility Classification</u>
<1,000	Class 1
1,001 – 5,000	Class 2
5,001 – 25,000	Class 3
Over 25,000	Class 4

Timeline to Comply with Rule

- Class 1 Facility – 1 year from effective date (April 1, 2003)
- Class 2 Facility – 2 years from effective date (April 1, 2004)
- Class 3 Facility – 3 years from effective date (April 1, 2005)
- Class 4 Facility – 4 years from effective date (April 1, 2006)

Required Educational Level

A minimum educational requirement of a High School Diploma or G.E.D. is applied to all levels of certification.

“Exemption” Change

Exemption for systems serving a population of under 500 has been eliminated.

Every Water and/or Wastewater system must have a certified operator. (If a system has at least 15 service connections or regularly serves an average of at least 25 individuals daily at least 60 days out of the year. Also, if the sanitary wastewater treatment system has a capacity of 1,500 gallons per day or more.)

Operator in Charge

The Operator of any Public Water System or any Community Sewerage System shall hold current and valid Professional Certification(s) of the required category(s) at or above the level required for the total system and an individual system.

Multiple Shifts

Systems operating with multiple shifts are required to have a minimum of one certified operator **present** on each shift who holds the level of certification required for that facility. (This refers to operating multiple shifts at a water and/or wastewater treatment facility.)

One Hour Rule

If a facility does not operate with multiple shifts, an operator shall demonstrate that, when not actually present at the facility, he is capable of responding to the location within one hour of being notified that his presence is needed.

Categories of Certification

CATEGORY	WHO IS REQUIRED TO OBTAIN CERTIFICATION
Water Production	<p>Water production certifications are required on all facilities that obtain groundwater (water wells) or surface water (intake structures) for the purpose of providing water for potable purposes. For those systems that use groundwater as a source of raw water and that do not alter the physical, chemical or bacteriological quality of the water other than simple disinfection, operators <u>will not</u> be required to hold certificates for treatment in addition to production. A facility that has been assigned a public water system (PWS) number is required to obtain a water production certification.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> An industrial facility utilizes an on-site water well to supply water to the facility's restrooms and eye wash/safety shower stations. An operator who holds a Water Production Certificate is required for this facility. (The operator may also be required to hold a Water Distribution Certificate.)</p>
Water Distribution	<p>Water distribution certifications are required on all portions of the water supply system in which water is conveyed from the water treatment plant or other supply point to the premises of the consumer.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> An industrial facility receives potable water from a local municipality. The facility then <u>pumps</u> the potable water to various points throughout the site (<i>i.e.</i>, restrooms and eye wash/safety shower stations). The operator of this system is required to hold a Water Distribution Certificate.</p>
Water Treatment	<p>Water treatment certifications are required for all operators of facilities that use surface water as a source of raw water (for potable purposes), as well as those groundwater systems that involve treatment beyond simple disinfection and/or which in some way alters the physical, chemical or bacteriological quality of the water. Water treatment certification shall not be required for groundwater systems for which the only type of treatment employed is simple disinfection, and where the well(s) has been determined not to be under the direct influence of surface water.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> An industrial facility utilizes water from on-site groundwater wells or a nearby river as a raw water supply for both process and sanitary purposes. The intake water undergoes both physical and chemical treatment. A certified operator is required for water treatment. (The operator must also hold Water Production and Water Distribution Certificates.)</p>
Wastewater Collection	<p>Wastewater collection certifications are required on all components of a sewerage system except for the sanitary treatment plant.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> An industrial facility utilizes a system of lift stations and an underground sewer system to direct their sanitary wastewater to a sewerage treatment plant with a minimum design capacity greater than 1,500 gallons per day (GPD). A certified operator is required for this sanitary wastewater collection system (in addition to a Wastewater Treatment Certification).</p>
Wastewater Treatment	<p>Wastewater treatment certifications are required on all treatment facilities with a minimum capacity of 1,500 gallons per day or more (<i>i.e.</i>, publicly-owned, private, commercial or industrial sanitary treatment plants) that provide for the treatment of sanitary wastewater and the reduction and/or handling of sludge removed from such wastewater.</p> <p><u>Example:</u> An industrial facility utilizes a sewerage treatment plant with a minimum design capacity greater than 1,500 GPD for the treatment and discharge of the facility's sanitary wastewater. The operator of this treatment plant is required to hold a Wastewater Treatment Certificate.</p>

Examinations

- Operators must take and pass an exam that demonstrates that they have the necessary skills, knowledge, ability and judgment as appropriate for the classification of the system.
- Operators must make written application to the committee of certification to take each examination or series of examinations.
- Examinations shall be taken and passed in sequence from the Class 1 to the Class 4 in each category.
- Applicants may not apply to take and may not take examinations for certification higher than one level above that for which they are currently qualified.
- If an applicant takes an examination and fails to attain a passing grade (70 % or higher), he must wait a minimum of 90 days before he can take another exam in the same category and level.
- After three failed attempts at the same examination, an applicant will be required to attend a 40-houring training course before retesting will be allowed.
- Upon written request, examinations may be reviewed in the Operator Certification Program Office in Baton Rouge within 30 days following receipt of notification of results.
- Request for examinations to be administered orally may be considered by the administrator, upon written request by an applicant that is submitted at least 30 days in advance with verifiable proof from a physician that the applicant has a medical condition temporarily preventing him from taking the examination in the conventional manner.

Operator Qualifications (Required Points)

<u>Certification Level</u>	<u>Required Points</u>
Operator-In-Training	0
Class 1	1
Class 2	2
Class 3	5
Class 4	8

Point Values (Education/Experience)

Education

- Each year of formal college education (minimum of 30 semester hours) = 1 point
- Each year of formal graduate level education = 1.5 points
- Each semester hour (credit) for college-level courses = 0.033 point
- Each 40-hour qualified, approved training course = 0.10 point
- Each 8 hours of qualifying, approved continuing education = 0.02 point
- Each 1 hour of qualifying, approved continuing education = 0.0025 point

Experience

- Each year of qualifying operator experience = 1 point
- Each year of qualifying related experience = 0.5 point
- Each year of qualifying supervisory experience = 1.5 points

Note:

Required point values for education and experience are in addition to the minimum level of education (High School Diploma or G.E.D.). Point values required for Classes 1 and 2 may be from experience alone although 25% of this value may be acquired from education credit. No more than 75% of the total required points for Classes 3 and 4 may be obtained from education or experience alone.

Certification Titles

Professional Certification

- Anyone who has passed the appropriate examination and meets the education and experience requirements is eligible for Professional Certification.
- All persons seeking Professional Certification must be employed or seeking employment by a water or wastewater utility. (“Utility” in this context is interpreted to include a commercial or industrial system or facility.)

Limited Certification

- These certifications are no longer issued.
- Current Limited Certifications are valid only for the system in which the operator is employed. If the operator of the system leaves employment, then the Limited Certification is no longer valid.

Provisional Certification

- This certification may be issued to any applicant who successfully passes an examination but does not meet the qualifications for Professional Certification (*i.e.*, does not meet the education and/or experience requirements).
- A Provisional Certificate shall not qualify an individual to serve as the Operator of the system or facility.
- A Provisional Certificate may be converted to a Professional Certificate once the certificate holder meets all required qualifications and assumes the duties of an active operator of a water or wastewater system.

Operator-In-Training

- These certificates may be granted to newly hired personnel who have not previously been certified or who have not held any type of certification for in excess of two years and who do not presently qualify for a professional or provisional certificate.
- The certification officer will maintain records of all approved education, training and experience credits accumulated by the operator-in-training.
- An Operator-In-Training may not be designated as the Operator of the system or facility.

Application for Certification

- Applicants who pass the required examinations, and meet the minimum education and experience requirements, and are actively employed (or seeking employment) by a water or wastewater system will be notified that they may apply for Professional Certification.
- Applicants who pass an examination but do not meet the education and experience requirements will be notified of what education and/or experience and/or training is required to qualify. Such applicants, upon payment of the appropriate fee, will be issued applicable Provisional Certification(s).
- All applications for certifications (with appropriate fees) shall be addressed to:

Administrator, Operator Certification Program
Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals
Office of Public Health
6867 Bluebonnet Boulevard
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70810

- Both new operators and existing operators requesting renewal of their certification will be required to complete a 15 question, open book examination called “Certification Law and Rules Examination”. This exam must be submitted as part of the application process.

Renewal and Recertification

- Operators shall enumerate, certify, and provide evidence that he has attended a minimal number of contact hours of approved operator training for each certificate held during the previous two-year period.
- A minimum of 16 contact hours is required for renewal of any certifications held in water categories or 8 hours per certificate, whichever is greater. (16 hours if you hold 1 or 2 water certifications and 24 hours if you hold all 3 water certifications.)
- A minimum of 16 contact hours is required for renewal of any certification held in wastewater categories.
- Operators for whom certification has expired in excess of two years are not eligible to renew their license(s), and must reapply for certification (beginning with Class 1 certification).

Information regarding the availability of approved classes for continuing education credit, training materials, and certification study materials in addition to any information pertinent to this new rule can be obtained from:

**Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals
Office of Public Health
Certification Office
6867 Bluebonnet Boulevard
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70810
(225) 765-5058 (Phone)
(225) 765-5060 (FAX)**

For further questions concerning this rule and other water regulatory issues, please contact Danny Smith using the following contact information.



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