

**Wastewater Operator Certification Program
Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes**

April 4, 2007

Yakima, Ecology Bldg., Oreanna Room

Members:

Willy Breshears	X	Tom Holmes	X	Melinda Wilson	X
Todd Carlson	X	Doug Miller	X	DeAnna Windh	X
Poppy Carre	X	Jill Parker	X		
Kathleen Emmett	X	Tim Pelton	X	Scribe: Cheryl Rickertsen	X

The meeting opened at 11:40 am

Opening

- 1) Members introduced themselves and welcomed new member, Tom Holmes.
- 2) November 2006 meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted for posting on the OpCert website.
- 3) The meeting agenda was reviewed.
- 4) Poppy reviewed the exam stats. There were 114 lost, but 40 new operators for the June exam. She feels the numbers are growing.

Advisory Committee Membership

- 1) The Advisory Committee Members' List was passed around and members were asked to add their cell phone numbers.
- 2) Jill, Doug, and Todd's membership will end this year. Poppy asked if these folks would be returning. Both Todd and Doug said they would return; Jill would like to return but will have to discuss with her boss before making a commitment.
- 3) The group discussed the Mike Erickson e-mail.
 - i) Some agree that it is difficult to have a group IV representing Group I and II operators. Jill mentioned that we may lose some of the perspectives of the lower level operators.
 - (1) It is difficult to get and retain Operator I or II levels. Often, their supervisor won't support their position; and they move up quickly and are no longer a I or II.
 - ii) Mike has maintenance experience and the group didn't feel that this was an issue. If you work at a plant, you should be able to test.
 - iii) Mike was voted in 4 yes and 2 no.
 - b) The question came up if we need to define who will represent the positions.
 - i) The group agreed that it was more important to have members rather than vacancies.

One Year Experience Requirement

- 1) Rich Marcley, DOE Permit Manager and Enforcement, joined the meeting to discuss the situation in the Conconully community. Discussions included how much experience and training is required to qualify to take the Operator exam. Conconully personnel feel that Poppy and Rich both have a personal vendetta against them and will not issue certification. Consensus of the group is that the Conconully employee be issued an OIT, work an additional 9 months, and then upgrade his certification to a Group I.
 - a) There have been a number of times that the city personnel have been dishonest in their statements. Ecology feels they now have someone in there that they can trust.
- 2) Poppy handed out a sample Affidavit of Employment form and asked for comments.
 - a) Willy suggested putting a % worked next to each duty description.
 - b) The group suggested deleting the duties all together and have wording to include examples.

- i) Poppy will create a new version that includes the last statement on the WAC and send out via e-mail. She would like everyone to review and return with comments and suggestions.

Electronic Exams

- 1) Poppy announced that she would like the Operator Certification Exams to be taken electronically by January of 2008.
 - a) Announcements will be made via postcards, newsletter, meetings, and the website. Poppy will notify the section meeting groups.
 - b) The benefits include flexibility of when the exam is taken, control, and the security while they are being taken.
 - i) ABC is already conducting their exams on-line.
 - ii) User surveys of past exams taken in this manner have come back at a 98% approval rate.
 - iii) Examinees are able to scroll back to look at a question and change it if needed.
 - iv) Examinees receive instant results and will no longer have to wait 4 – 6 weeks for exam results.
 - v) Examinees don't have to be physically in the state to take the test. Poppy recently conducted a test for a person located in Florida.
 - c) The tests are only offered in Seattle and Spokane.
 - d) Once the applicant applies for a password, they would then have 30 days to take the test.
 - e) There is not an option to pilot this program first.
 - f) This will not cost Ecology any money; however, there will be a fee passed on to the testing operator at the time of the exam.
 - g) The testing company, AMP, offers sample tests at the beginning of the exam.

ABC Relevancy Criteria

- 1) The group would like to follow ABC's Relevancy criteria; specifically attachment #4 and #5. If there is something on there or not on there that needs to be modified, we need to ask ABC to make the modifications.
- 2) The committee recommended that safety or other training must be at a minimum of 3 hours (.3 CEUs). Tom recommended it and Jill, Tim, Willy and Todd second the motion.
- 3) An announcement should be sent out that from this point forward, we must meet the list of relevancy.
- 4) Discussions included what is going to be relevant and what is specific. The group agreed to adopt the ABC criteria – all are relevant. College courses are relevant – not specific. Biology, chemistry, engineering courses are specific under General. ABC goes to board meeting to adopt and we will follow; going into effect in January 2008.
 - a) If there is a major change with ABC's list, a special meeting will be held to discuss. We can add or change the list but we can not take anything away.
 - b) We currently have reciprocity in forty states.

Proposed Rule Change

- 1) Kathleen Emmett discussed the proposed rule change. She mentioned that currently the staff level is lower than that of the recommended ratio. She reviewed the current duties of the staff and what the future needs look like.
 - a) They are looking at including a Professional Growth Data Base on the website where operators can go on-line to find out the PG status. This would eliminate a lot of the calls that come in to Poppy's office.
- 2) Right now, the request for the rule change is getting the buy-off from the stakeholders.

Roundtable

1) Poppy:

- a) Mentioned that the operators are getting older; we lost 200 and usually it is about 50. New York State has gone to committees to promote why operators are important.
- b) Exam Reviews: ABC is requesting names by April 14th. Every two years the exams are reviewed and they ask for volunteers to conduct the reviews. The group will go through about ½ of the question bank and decipher if the questions are still relevant, how important they are, should there be some new questions added. This position is confidential and you must hold a grade higher than the level you are reviewing. ABC will pay mileage, lunch, and lodging in advance. Poppy will send an email to all when she receives confirmation of names.
- c) Melinda is doing the website and managing the list serve. Let Poppy know if you see a need for the website. We need to promote the operators to use the website. We possibly would use the certification # as the PIN to access the databases.
- d) Tim offered the Spokane plant for the April meeting. Due to spring break the April meeting will be held during the 3rd week of April (April 16, 2008).
 - i) The next meeting in November remains as planned.

Meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.