

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

*April 21, 2009
Ecology, Central Regional Office, Yakima*

Members:

Breshears, Willy	CH2M Hill OMI	Absent
Carlson, Todd	Pierce County Utilities	X
Carre, Poppy	Ecology WWTP OpCert. Program	X
Holmes, Tom	City of Snoqualmie	X
O'Neill, Andy	City of Pullman	X
Parker, Jill	Evergreen rural Water of Washington	X
Pelton, Tim	City of Spokane	X
Windh, DeAnna	Lakehaven Utility District	X
Glaser, Russ	Clark Public Utilities	X
Emmett, Kathleen	Ecology Water Quality Program	Absent
Wilson, Melinda	Ecology WWTP OpCert. Program	X
Cheryl Bergener	Washington State – Dept. of Health	Absent
Rickertsen, Cheryl, Scribe	CH2M HILL OMI	Absent

The meeting opened at 10:50 am.

Opening

- 1) Group reviewed agenda.
 - a) Poppy proposed to move “Review Program Policies” below “Professional Growth.”
Group agreed
- 2) Group reviewed November 2008 meeting summary.
 - a) Group approved changes
 - b) Group agreed that Cheryl Bergener would clarify roundtable comments.
 - c) Group ok'd to post after Cheryl makes clarification.

Certification Program Update

- 1) Poppy reviewed the exam stats.
 - a) 50 new operators applied for the February exam – 34 new operators passed.
 - b) Number of Active Operators: 1932.
- 2) Changes to OpCert Program:
 - a) Poppy announced the application revision is complete and the program will not accept the old application. Ecology mailed a cover letter with the revised application and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) pamphlet to all active employers.
 - b) The OpCert program database has been up and running for a little over a year. Operators have been able to access their professional growth data for about a year.
 - c) SecureAccess Washington (SAW) accounts that haven't been accessed for a year were cancelled. Water Quality Program IT staff requested an extension. The request was granted and the SAW accounts will be cancelled after four years of inactivity.
 - d) Poppy announced that the program is working out the details for operator's to access their annual renewals online. She anticipates the program to begin in 2010 for the 2011 renewal cycle.

- e) OpCert staff is going to close the rule change list serve and utilize it to communicate with operators and wastewater treatment plants (WWTP). The change will go into effect in May or June 2009.

Advisory Committee Function

- 1) Poppy reminded the group of their priority to provide guidance and recommendations to Ecology for the wastewater operator certification program. She said she thought the group was getting off track and asked them to write a function statement as a reminder of the committees' goals.
 - a) The committee brainstormed and Poppy put together a list of ideas. (Attachment A)
 - b) Poppy is going to send the list to the committee members to review.
 - c) The committee will finalize the function statement at the November 2009 advisory committee meeting.

Website Conversion

- 1) Melinda announced that the Agency revised their web pages and the OpCert web page needs to be updated to meet agency standards. She asked the committee to give their input for language and content.
 - a) The committee recommended the following 6 main headings: 1) Application, 2) Training & CEUs, 3) Publications, 4) Operator Information, 5) Advisory Committee, 6) Awards/Recognition.
 - i. Each heading has related page links associated with it.
 - ii. The committee recommended to keep program contact information easily accessible on the main page.

Professional Growth

- 1) Poppy presented "*ABC's Continuing Education Course Topic Guidelines for Wastewater Treatment Operators, effective January 1, 2009*" to the committee. Russ made the motion to accept the guidelines for specific continuing education units (CEU) Andy seconded the motion. The motion carried to approve the guidelines for specific CEU, as written, beginning with the 2010 professional growth period, 5 – 3.
 - a) OpCert program staff will put together an announcement and post it on the OpCert webpage and send the announcement to all operators with the 2010 renewal notice.
- 2) Poppy asked the committee to make a recommendation for the relevancy of industrial training. The committee agreed that industrial training will earn relevant CEUs.
- 3) Poppy asked the committee to define specific and relevant training.
 - a) The committee approved the definitions provided in the 2008 Operator Certification Program Updates with the addition of the ABC guidelines reference and other industry training:
 - i) Specific training is directly related to improving competencies in areas that relate to operating a wastewater treatment plant. Specific trainings include wastewater treatment process, operation and maintenance of equipment, and lab procedures as defined by "*The Association of Boards of Certification Continuing Education Course Topic Guidelines for Wastewater Treatment Operators, Effective January 1, 2009.*"
 - ii) Relevant training does not directly relate to operating a wastewater treatment plant, but is accepted for CEUs towards meeting professional growth. Relevant trainings include drinking water and other industry training, safety, collections, and management.

- 4) Andy asked Poppy if she reviews training agendas after the operator has attended the training. Poppy said that she will look at the agenda and course content to determine if the training will earn CEUs. Based on that, the committee recommended that Poppy should require all training evaluations for CEUs to be submitted prior to the training.
 - a) Beginning in 2010, all CEUs given for professional growth are required to be pre-approved.
 - b) Beginning in 2010, prior to taking a class, operators are responsible to check with the instructor or trainer to verify that they requested CEUs for the training, if they want the training to earn CEUs for their professional growth.
 - c) Beginning in 2010, all training must be a minimum of 3 hours to earn CEUs.

Review Program Policies

- 1) Poppy updated the OpCert program policies and asked the committee to review them for accuracy and readability.
 - a) The committee reviewed the changes and approved them.
 - b) Poppy is going to add the Professional Growth definitions and post the policies.
 - c) In 2010 Poppy is going to add the criteria for training pre-approval and 3-hour class minimum.
- 2) Poppy asked for committee input to reference maintenance in the Operating Experience section of policies.
 - a) The committee agreed that the definition included in the Operating Experience section of the policies was adequate and nothing needed to be added.

Electronic Exam Conversion Update

- 1) Poppy announced that the electronic exam will be offered beginning June 1, 2009.
 - a) OpCert program staff prepared a Frequently Asked Questions brochure and mailed it to all active operators and employers.
 - b) Poppy will figure the exam stats on a quarterly basis beginning in June.

Roundtable

- 1) DeAnna: Operators need to nominate each other for PNCWA Operator of the Year Award. PNCWA needs help getting the word out. If anyone is interested in nominating someone, have them contact their local section president.
- 2) Jill: Evergreen Rural Water is going to give exam reviews twice a year beginning in 2010 in both Eastern and Western Washington.
- 3) Tim: Spokane started using the Egg-shaped digesters. They are starting construction again and have two golf course demos for reuse. They have been working on getting their phosphorus levels below 10mg/l.

Next Meeting

- 1) November 2009 – Ecology will host.
- 2) Poppy will send request for dates.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m..

Attachment A

Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certification Advisory Committee Mission Statement

The purpose of the wastewater operator certification advisory committee (committee) is to represent the wastewater operators of Washington and to provide advice to Department of Ecology (Ecology) wastewater operator certification (OpCert) program staff for certification issues such as:

- Professional growth
- Program policies
- Recommendations

Why are we here and why are there operators

Maintain the integrity to ensure operators are competent to protect WA waters

Technical advice to Ecology on how to produce more competent operators

Making the OpCert program work for operator's

We make recommendations for improving the program on how to enhance and implement the program

Support recognize validate the core skill sets found within competent wastewater operators within WA