

# Operator Update

## Wastewater Operator Certification

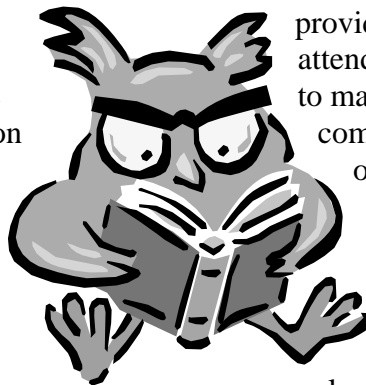
November 2004



### Professional Growth Requirement

As a certified operator the information in this article should not be new; however, it is important enough to your wastewater certification to merit review. One of the two requirements for maintaining wastewater certification is continuing education, also known as professional growth. The operator is required to earn three college credits or continuing education units (CEU) in something relevant to wastewater treatment and operation (3 credits/CEUs are equivalent to approximately 30 contact hours of training.)

As a training course is completed, please send a copy of the proof of attendance to Poppy Carre at the Wastewater Operator Certification Program. Maintaining a wastewater operator certification is ultimately the certified



operator's responsibility. Some employers may manage and track their employees training. Some trainers may or may not provide the wastewater operator certification program with the training attendance roster; others may provide the operator with the proof of attendance. It is important for the operator to maintain his/her own record of completed training. This means a proof of attendance and not just a receipt of payment. If you have taken training and wish for it to be counted toward your professional growth requirement, please send me a copy of the proof of attendance. If an employer or trainer has agreed to submit the attendance documentation, be sure to get some sort of proof of attendance for your records. It is the operator's responsibility to make sure that their professional growth has been fully

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### Association of Boards of Certification's (ABC) New Multiple Entry Exam

ABC is currently in the process of developing what they call a Multiple-Entry Exam. Currently, ABC's standardized exams are intended to be taken in sequence (i.e., the Level I exam is taken before the Level II and the II before the III and so on). As you may have guessed this type of exam is called Sequential.

Many of the states using ABC exams, including Washington State, do not require the exams in their states be taken in sequence. As a result, the concern is that if

the exams are not taken in sequence, the examinee taking their first exam at the Group IV level will not have shown their competency at the Group I, II, and III levels.

In an attempt to better measure competency of those operators not required to take certification exams in sequence, the membership of ABC have asked that a standardized exam for each level of certification be developed that consists of core (need to know) questions along with level/group

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# ABC New Multiple Entry Exams

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specific questions. This new exam is called a Multiple-Entry Exam. ABC hopes to have the new exams completed by the end of the year.

What does this mean to you? For every exam after the Class I, there will be more questions and therefore, you will be allowed more time to take the exam. The Class II exam will contain 20 additional questions from the Class I exam; the Class III exam will contain 20 questions from the Class I and 30 questions from the Class II; and the Class IV exam will contain 20 questions from the Class I, 30 questions from the Class II and 30 questions from the Class III.

The exams will look something like this:

Class I	100 questions	3 hours
Class II	120 questions	3 ½ hours
Class III	150 questions	4 ½ hours
Class IV	180 questions	5 ½ hours



Want more info about the Wastewater Operator Certification Program? Visit us on the web at:  
[www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/op\\_cert/](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/op_cert/)

## CERTIFIED WASTEWATER OPERATOR

### Professional Growth Recommendation

As per chapter 173-230 WAC, one of the requirements to maintain a current wastewater treatment plant operator certification is that the operator must earn and document 3 college credits or continuing education units (CEU) every three years in “relevant” training. Three college credits or CEUs are equivalent to approximately thirty hours of training. The Department of Ecology has determined the relevance of training on a case by case basis by using the definition of “professional growth” as a guide. Failure to meet this requirement constitutes revocation of the operator’s certification by the Department of Ecology.

Professional growth is defined as, “Of, pertaining to, engaged in, or appropriate for a profession” “The process of growing.” In effect, if a particular training could be considered relevant to various duties with regard to the daily operation and maintenance of a wastewater treatment facility, or if a facility owner found a training to be required for a safe work environment, or if a training could be considered useful for professional advancement the training was accepted toward the operator’s professional growth requirement.

The certified operator is on the front line with regard to protecting public health and the environment. It is imperative that an operator receive appropriate training to maintain and increase their knowledge for the optimum operation and maintenance of wastewater treatment facilities throughout the State. Relevant training has included wastewater treatment training along with water treatment, safety, management, computer, etc. Although the Wastewater Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee agrees that these types of trainings are all of some value, the committee feels that it is important for purposes of the protection of public health and the environment to make the following recommendation:

*It strongly recommended that while choosing training that will meet an operator’s professional growth requirement, the operator and/or the employer should ensure that one out of the required three credits/CEUs (ten hours) be specific to wastewater treatment. The other two credits/CEUs (20 hours) may include water treatment or distribution, management, computer, safety and other relevant training on a case by case basis.*



## Professional Growth Requirement

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documented with the Department of Ecology Wastewater Operator Certification Program. If, at the end of the professional growth period, an operator has not successfully documented the required training, that operator's certification can not be renewed and may ultimately be revoked.

The professional growth period is on a three year cycle with the last period ending December 31, 2003. The current period began January 1, 2004 and will end December 31, 2006. Ecology is required to ensure that an operator has "at least" three years to achieve the professional growth requirement which means that if you became certified in the middle of a professional growth period, you are given the rest of that period and all of the next period to meet the professional growth requirement. After that you will be on the same three year cycle as the other certified operators. ✨