



# 2009 Wastewater Operator Certification Program Updates

## End of Professional Growth (PG) Cycle Brings Changes for Next PG Cycle

Congratulations! We completed the first professional growth cycle with the new requirements. To assist you with the next pg cycle we're adding some tools to the wastewater operator certification program (OpCert) web site – starting with a list of approved courses indicating specific and relevant continuing education units (CEU). The list is in its infancy stage, but we'll update it regularly. Please check the list prior to registering for a class. Classes must be preapproved and it's your responsibility to check before you take a class. If a class you're interested in taking isn't on the approved course list you need to contact Poppy or Melinda.

The Association of Boards of Certification released national course topic guidelines. We're adding that as well. Please be aware of the topic headings – primarily Safety, WW Collection Process, and Administration/Management. Just because the topics are titled as such, doesn't mean that just anything in the category earns specific CEUs. You'll need to check the approved courses list to see if the class earns specific or relevant CEUs.

Some training that we accepted as specific in the 2007 – 2009 professional growth period is no longer specific in the 2010 – 2012 professional growth period. For example, only basic electrical for operators is specific; all other electrical training is relevant.

## Specific vs. Relevant

Still have questions about specific and relevant? The best way to know if training is specific or relevant is to ask yourself if you could use it to meet the experience criteria for your certification. If the answer is yes, then it's specific. If the answer is no, then it's relevant. For example, if you're a plumber and decide to switch careers to wastewater operations, you'll have some training that is similar to wastewater training, but you wouldn't be able to use your plumbing experience to meet the experience criteria to qualify you for certification.

Here are some examples of topics that fall under the specific category: **Basic** – Computers, electricity, hydraulics, and math – all for operators, water chemistry and microbiology; **Equipment O&M** – Aeration equipment, belt filter press, blowers & compressors, electrical controls, scada system, generators, hydraulic, instrumentation, motor control centers, motors, engines, drives, pipes, valves, fittings, pumps; **Treatment Process & Control** – Nutrient removal, Biosolids, storage, & handling, disinfection, odor control, process control techniques, sampling/analysis, sand/media filters, screens, grinders, comminutors, sedimentation, clarification, sludge dewatering, stabilization.

Here are some examples of topics that fall under the relevant category: **Safety** – Hazwoper, fall/accident protection, equipment safety; **Collections** – cleaning/flushing & pigging, tv inspection, vactor trucks, service lines and connections, trenchless technologies; **Management** – sexual harassment, ethics, time management; **Industrial Wastewater; Drinking Water**. If a training's main focus falls under one of these categories the entire class will earn relevant CEUs.

You can argue that each of these items are related in some way or another to wastewater, but if wastewater isn't the primary focus of the training it will earn relevant CEUs. Don't be fooled by a class title either – the class can be named anything – it's the content that counts. When in doubt ask – call Poppy or Melinda for clarification.

## **Electronic Exam**

In June 2009, we switched from pencil and paper exams to electronic exams. The transition went very smoothly and we quickly fell into a routine. It takes about 3 weeks to review an application and send the information to Applied Measurement Professionals (AMP).

After we review the application and send the examinee's information to AMP, AMP sends exam and registration instructions to the applicant. To expedite receipt of that information, you should include a valid email address with your application. If you don't receive the information from AMP within 1 week of notification from Ecology, you should contact us immediately. If you misplace the letter or delete the email from AMP let us know and we'll give you the contact information you'll need for AMP.

## **OpCert Web Site**

We've added some new features to the OpCert web site. There's a new fill-in application form that you can print and save for future use. And ABC updated their need to know criteria. The OpCert web site is the main source of communication between you and OpCert program staff. We frequently add updates and reminders to our web page, so check it often at [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/wastewater/op\\_cert/index.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/wastewater/op_cert/index.html)

### **Here are some of the features you'll find on our web page:**

- ✓ Contact information for Poppy and Melinda.
- ✓ Fill-in and savable application form.
- ✓ Application packet request.
- ✓ Update your mailing address and employer information.
- ✓ SecureAccess Washington registration instructions.
- ✓ Announcements from the OpCert program.
- ✓ ABC's need to know criteria for the exam.
- ✓ ABC course topic guidelines.
- ✓ Specific and relevant definitions.
- ✓ ABC's formula/conversion chart.
- ✓ Approved course list.
- ✓ Learn about upcoming training.
- ✓ Find approved distance education trainers.
- ✓ Related links.
- ✓ View your current and past professional growth records.
- ✓ Sign up for the OpCert list serve.

## **New Communication Tool**

We are moving forward with a new communication tool called a listserv. We can use it to email general messages to everyone that subscribes for it. The goal of the listserv is to reduce excessive printing and outgoing mail. We're going to start using it to communicate with operators and plants in 2010. Please take a minute and go to the web site and join the OpCert listserv.

## **Online Renewal Notice**

Many of you have already registered on SecureAccess Washington (SAW) to view your professional growth data online. Next year you'll be able to print your renewal notices as well. In October 2010, we'll send an announcement that you can go to your SAW account and print your renewal notice. We'll email the announcement to everyone on the listserv.

We realize not everyone has access to the internet and can't subscribe to SAW and the listserv. *These features are in no way meant to replace a person.* If you don't have access to a computer, or have questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. We added this tool for you and we hope you find it useful.

*Thanks for all you do!*

*Poppy and Melinda*