



State of Nevada

Nevada Division of Environmental Protection

Bureau of Safe Drinking Water

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NEVADA PUBLIC WATER SYSTEM -- OPERATOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Consistent with State policy established in 1977 concerning the provision of safe drinking water and to promote the public health and welfare, the 1991 Nevada State Legislature enacted legislation (Nevada Revised Statute 445A.875 through 880) that created the public water system operator certification program. The program was implemented by the State Health Division and regulations were drafted and approved by the State Board of Health. They have undergone several revisions over the years to meet the guidance requirements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and to meet the growing needs of the state. The implementation and enforcement of the regulations now falls under the authority of the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) through the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water.

The operator certification regulations apply to all persons who operate community or non-transient non-community public water systems and to persons who operate transient non-community systems that utilize surface water as a source. These persons must obtain a fully certified operator certificate issued by the NDEP. Fully certified operators may operate more than one water system. Certified operators must renew their certificates every two years. Continued education training credits are required to renew certificates. Training classes must be approved by the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water.

The type and size of a public water system will determine what type of certified operator is required. A Distribution type system must utilize ground water as a source and may use chlorination for disinfection. A water system that does not meet Distribution type criteria is classified as a Treatment type system. The NDEP or appropriate district health department will determine if a water system is a groundwater, surface water, or ground water under the direct influence of surface water system. Public water systems may require additional evaluation to determine what type and level of an operator is needed.

This process is accomplished by assessing cumulative point systems in the regulations. The point systems utilize multiple factors and indicate the complexity of the system being evaluated. Some of the factors are population served, type of source water, number of pressure zones, number of storage tanks, pumping stations, disinfection method, treatment for contaminants and other factors. The cumulative point total will determine what type and level of a fully certified operator is required to be in responsible charge of the system. The system must have an operator that meets or exceeds the minimum operator requirement. Larger and more complex systems may require additional certified operators.

Candidates for operator certification must pass written examinations and have various levels of required experience to obtain fully certified operator certificates. Grade levels for operator certification start at a minimum grade of Distribution 1 and progress to grade Distribution 4. There are corresponding levels for Treatment operators. Persons may possess both Distribution

and Treatment certificates. Operators must complete a minimum of five contact hours (1/2 CEU) of approved training for the renewal of a Grade 1 or Grade 2 certificate. Grade 3 and Grade 4 certificates require a minimum of 10 contact hours (1.0 CEU) of approved training. Training certificates or other documentation of training must be included with all renewal applications. A fully certified operator may reinstate a certificate within six months after expiration if the required training has been attended and the additional fee has been paid.

An Operator-in-Training (OIT) certification examination is offered to those persons who want to work in the water industry but do not have the experience for a full certification. Operator-in-Training certificates may be converted to full certificates after the required experience in operating is obtained. Certification through reciprocity with other states or foreign countries is specifically addressed in the regulations and is granted on a case by case basis.

All applications for operator certification examinations are reviewed for eligibility by the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water. The Bureau accepts only original applications by mail and does not accept applications by fax. Appropriate fees must accompany the application.