



Nevada Water and Wastewater Operator's Forum

Hosted by: Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Safe Drinking Water
901 South Stewart Street, Suite 4001, Carson City, NV 89701

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 29, 2017 – 9:00am to 11:00am

Location: *Richard H. Bryan Building,
Tahoe Hearing Room on the 2nd Floor
901 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89701*

Phone conference to: 1-888-363-4734, access code 1515199

Elko Video Conference: Was not available

Las Vegas Video Conference: No one attended

Agenda

1) Call to Order and Introductions. (Bob Foerster)

Meeting was called to order at 9:02am.

Forum Members Present: Max Sosa, BSDW/OpCert; Bob Foerster, NvRWA; Greg Reed, Gardnerville Ranchos GID; Ron Penrose, Tri-Sage

On the Phone: Clark Phillips, Elko County; Sunny Gamren, Elko County; Aaron Hughes, NVRWA; Adam Katsar, NYTC; Dean Cernick, City of Elko; Jim Kerr, Elko County; Mike Boney, NVRWA; Dale Johnson, City of Elko; Ashley Jacobson, NWEA; Kevin Ryan, US EPA Region 9; Jen Ellis, Marigold Mine; Steven Garner, CA-NV Section

Introductions and Guests: Cameron McKay, KGID; Brandon Garden, KGID; Jack Byrom, TMWA; Bob Lochridge, IVGID; Brett Reed, DCU; Jim Youngblood, IVGID; Jason B Cooper, NDEP-OFA; Chris Hoffert, Lyon County Utilities; Brian Gibbs, Lyon County; Scott Fleckenstein, Lyon County; Reed A Cozens, NDWR; Tim McCandlish, ABS Plumbing, Tanya Freeman, Old River Water; Will Raymond, TMWA, Linh Kieu NDEP

2) Approval of Forum/NTC Minutes from September 21, 2017 – Action Item

Greg Reed- Move to Approve

Ron Penrose-Second

Unanimous

3) Drinking Water Exam Results Review from September 21, 2017. (Max Sosa)



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Max Sosa- AWWA has listed deficient topic areas as a “Partial Mastering” rate of more than 20% so that these areas can be reviewed and further fine tune future training. The areas needing improvement are:

Distribution- Install equipment, monitor evaluate and adjust disinfection.

Treatment- Lab analysis, operate and maintain equipment, and comply with drinking water regulations.

Now for a brief summary of the September 2017 certification exams. 106 applicants took the exam and the overall passing rate was 68% as opposed to 54% previously. A significant improvement over the June 2017 exam.

4) **Training Needs / Forum Input**

Bob Foerster- Wants to look into regulation training. Maybe once or twice a year. Jennifer Carr mentioned that she would like to have ethics training for everyone as well. NVRWA is working on these trainings right now.

Linh Kieu- Mentioned that he agrees with Bob about the trainings with the reg changes on the ABC exams.

5) **Waterlines Status**

No updates with the Waterlines.

6) **NWEA Updates (Jake or Ashley Jacobson)**

Ashley Jacobson- Just had a meeting regarding the CEU's that will be mandatory and they are working on their bylaws, policies and procedures to update to meet all of those requirements. The next exams will be in April at the NWEA Conference at the Nugget.

7) **NDEP Updates (Max Sosa, Bureau of Safe drinking Water)**

Max Sosa-Please note that as of the end of July 2017, NDEP has a new Website and it can be accessed by going to <https://ndep.nv.gov/> select water and there you will find the operator certification page.

When you renew in 2017. You go the operator certification page select renewals and the applications will be at the bottom of the page. If you are going to use the epay system go back to the operator certification page and go to I want to... (remember checks only please, no credit cards) and select epay



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NDEP no longer has a training calendar. A new feature on the website is the NDEP Approved Contact Hours it is a spreadsheet listing all the continuing education contact hour that have been approved for renewal with their expiration date. This can be found under the heading Continuing Education (Contact hours)

Renewal applications have been accepted since September 1st, 2017: To get renewal cards out faster we are no longer printing the renewals cards all at one time. To date we have processed over 300 renewals and have sent out wallet cards. There are approximately 600 certification renewals that have not yet been received.

Renewal Policy Update:

From this point forward, effective January 1, 2017:

Operators will be required to maintain only their highest OIT grade for their respective certification type (Distribution or Treatment) and not their corresponding underlying OITs.

Operators will still need to maintain their Full certifications (if they have one) and are required to renew, convert and test in ascending order as per (NAC 445A.630.5).

- A CERTIFIED OPERATOR WITH:
- D 3 FULL, D4 OIT CERTIFICATION;
- T1 OIT, T2 OIT, T3 OIT CERTIFICATION

- WOULD ONLY RENEW THE:
- D 3 FULL, D4 OIT AND T3 OIT CERTIFICATION

- AND WOULD NEED THE FOLLOWING CONTACT HOURS:
- D 3 FULL / 10 HOURS, D4 OIT 10 / HOURS,
- T3 OIT / 10 HOURS

The operator would still be required to maintain the D3 Full certification and is required to convert and test in ascending order as per (NAC 445A.630.5).

If you have D1 OIT due 2017 / D2 OIT due 2018 you would renew the D2 OIT only. You would have to convert your D1 when eligible and then convert the D2.

The Nevada Water and Wastewater Operators' Forum subcommittee, the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water (BSDW) and WPC Water pollution control conducted a Nevada Drinking Water and Wastewater Certification Operator Regulation Update Workshop Wednesday September 27, 2017 at the 2017 Tri State Conference in Las Vegas.

The Nevada Water and Wastewater Operators' Forum (Forum) subcommittee and the Bureau of Safe Drinking Water (BSDW), continue reviewing operator certification policies and Operator Certification regulations (NAC 445A.615 – NAC 445A.652) and presented the proposed changes to the NDEP BSDW staff on November 21, 2017.

8) Operator Certification Program Review Committee Update



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Greg Reed- There have been some revisions since the last draft from September. There has been some modifications from then, but essentially, it is the same thing. They did do a presentation at Tri-State, but there were not a lot of feedback from that presentation. The regulations that were passed out will be the draft that they will be submitting to the State Environmental Commission for potential approval.

Bob Foerster- Suggested to go through the regulations part by part to see what people have to say on each section.

Section 1-Adding Language

Greg Reed- Mentioned that section one's intent was just to clarify the person in responsible in charge. It was the matter clearing that up so it was obvious on who that person was.

Section 2- Updating the language to add surface water or ground water under the influence of surface water

Guest- Agrees with section two because from a water rights perspective that are challenged with a lot of issues ground water and surface supply. There is a lot of recognition now that surface water influences ground water.

Section 3-Passing Score

No comments on section 3

Section 4-Experience Requirements

Greg Reed- Mentioned section 3A talks about taking two grades above your current certification. There were concerns about operators not being qualified so that is why they require a certain time period of experience before they were eligible to test. 3B added the language on system complexity. Related to that, we have worked on language to put policy in place so the person at Max's desk always has a consistent way to evaluate.

Linh Kieu- Mentioned that we did look at other states and although other states didn't necessarily do this, but they had different requirements so it wasn't particularly this type of level.

Greg Reed- In addition to what Link Kieu was saying, there were many states that had, if you had any experience at any water utility, you could sit for any exam. You did not have to have experience at a water utility of that classification.

Guest- Asked if we have uncovered problems with the current system without that revision?

Greg Reed- Answered that currently the feedback from a lot of operators are limited in their ability to test above and excel and move forward, they cannot do that currently with the regulations now. So this would allow an operator to become higher certified to a one to a three, a two to a four. This would give them an opportunity to move on in the future.

Bob Foerster- Mentioned the reason this came to our attention was systems that operate multiple facilities and they felt like they wanted these changes. We do not know how many operators this is addressing or how many water systems.



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Cam McKay- Asked how often are you going to be able to apply what a grade three system needs to a grade one system? Mentioned that you are not going to gain that experience that is needed to protect the public by jumping two grades. That is one of the reasons why he is against it. We want to continue to have that value within the public because the public perception of anyone that can get a certification come back and reflects us. Mentioned that we have to look at ethics. So, if you have a smaller system, an operator could say he goes up to take all the time, but there is nothing to back it up so all the documentation for renewals and this certification to move forward you would have to have the documentation that shows that operator has been to that plant on a regular basis.

Bob Foerster- Mentioned that so everyone is clear, he has looked at who operates which systems and we have in Elko County, Douglas County, Nye County and Lyon County, we have basically these counties operate multiple systems. In addition to those, we have several operation maintenance and operation companies that run multiple facilities. So he thinks those would be the individuals that would take advantage of these changes.

Cam McKay- Mentioned that it should apply to every water system and every operator in the state. So it doesn't benefit the public if an operator jumps two grades higher. They will not have the experience and in an emergency situation, they might not know what to do because the experience is not there.

Ren Penrose- Asked if the system is classified a D2-T2 and an operator has a D2-T2, can they test as far as a D4-T4 operator in training?

Max Sosa- Answered that yes, anyone can test as high as they want to as an operator in training.

Greg Reed-Mentioned that in addition with what Ron and Max were saying, that particular operator has to take twice as much training.

Cam McKay- Mentioned that a three and a four aren't the same. So once you get that grade three full certificate, you can go up one grade and you increased your CEU requirement. If you get your grade four OIT, that is the same thing as a grade three. So it does not change it because you already have to meet the CEU requirements for the grade three.

Greg Reed- Mentioned that if you have currently if you have grade three full and a grade 4 OIT, you are required to take twice as many certifications units as somebody that has a full three or a full four. That is one of the regulations that we are trying to change.

Cam McKay- Asked why are we changing that? They have the ability right now to get that OIT certification, not a full certification by going one up and the second one with an OIT. Then again, it comes back to experience, why are we changing it. It benefits the individual and doesn't take away from the agency they are working for.



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Jack Byrom- Asked if the operators can qualify, why we wouldn't want all of the highest qualifying people in all systems? He would hate to see the same suggestion about, say a professional engineer that we tell them we don't want you to have a full PE license because you have to live and work in Yerington, you don't need to be a full PE because Yerington is such a small community.

Cam McKay- Commented that is a valid point and the person hiring them would have to go back and look and see if the operator is certified as a grade four for example and see if they have that experience in that plant.

Bob Foerster- Commented that the overall qualifications are education, exam and experience. A person going from a two to a four, that operator would be making that decision to take on that extra training.

Jim Kerr- Commented that he understand where Cam is coming from on his comment, but with the changes of CEU's and the CEU requirements, even if you went to an OIT it is still the same CEU requirements so he does not see a big deal either way.

Linh Kieu- Mentioned that our intention is that not anyone that wants to apply will get this. What we have done in the past is, BSDW hasn't really created guidelines to allow people to upgrade. We do want to establish guidelines. We don't anticipate this being the norm, we expect this being the rare instance. Operators do have to meet certain criteria to do this, so it would not be a blanket approval in order to prevent backsliding and protect the public health.

Will Raymond- Asked is that why in NAC 445A item #3 it is that the division may credit, is it not a requirement? The division will consider on a case-by-case basis? Essentially, it is not a blanket OK correct?

Linh Kieu- Answered yes. For example, if you are working on a mobile home plant and you are the ambitious person, you can test all the way up with your OIT's, but when you try to convert to fulls, then we would say what else have you worked, what other experience do you have? If they couldn't provide anything else, then we would deny your conversions.

Will Raymond- Agreed with the idea of not reigning people in and letting them take their exams and trying to get their OIT's and he thinks that is where the division decides if that is applicable.

Steven Garner- Commented that hearing the latest discussion is encouraging because he is facing similar issues regarding the college, high school and veterans wanting to get into the industry. Knowing that everyone is stepping up to this challenge is hopeful for the people wanting to get into the industry and moving up in the industry.

Section 5- Certification Renewal and Training Hours Required



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Greg Reed- Commented that we looked out this at a whole package and including the increasing the contact hours.

Section 6- Renewal and Changing Gaining Hours for Each Certification to the Highest Certification

Will Raymond- Wanted to clarify the changes for each certification and contact hours.

Section 7- Fees

Greg Reed- Wanted to mention that the last time the fees were changed was 15 years ago. Wanted to mention that the staff for the Operator Certification Program are funded elsewhere and hopefully increasing the fees will help fund those positions.

Linh Kieu- Mentioned that 39% of our staff are funded by grants. With the increases, it should cover 70% of funding our staff. Reciprocity applications increased so much because so much time goes into them. There will be more time to talk about all this with the workshops on January 8th, 10th and 11th.

Greg Reed- One of the things that we want to do is look at the policies and get the policies ironed down so that no matter who is in Max's position, they will have guidelines.

Cam McKay- Mentioned that as of right now, no one has to sign off on the application so the operator could write anything on the app and there is no way of Max knowing.

Linh Kieu- Thinks that is what we can use this forum for to layout our guidelines.

Bob Foerster- There is a bill in congress that modifies the safe drinking water act and recommends everyone should read.

9) Member's Open Comments

Bob Foerster- Wanted to mention that upcoming apprenticeship program. He needs a water system or more than one to be an employer in order to move forward.

10) Public Comments

Jack Byrom- Asked when the test dates will be for 2018?

Bob Foerster- Answered that the March exam will be March 16, 2018 and the NVRWA Conference will be that week.



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Steven Garner- Mentioned that Advanced Water Treatments Operator Certification and CA- NV Water Association are moving forward. Both boards were approved in October to collaborate on bringing a certification exam out. Continue progress is coming together.

Kevin Ryan- The next Advanced Reuse Water Treatment Operator Certification meeting is January 11, 2018.

11) **Agenda Items for the Next NWWOF Meeting**

No agenda items.

12) **Next Forum Meeting(s) – Action Item**

Next meeting will be at the NVRWA Conference. No action will be held because it is TBD

14) **Adjourn**

Ron Penrose- Move to Approve

Greg Reed- Second

Unanimous

Adjourned at 10:50am

Reminder to Certified Operators: You are eligible to receive renewal contact hour(s) for attendance at Operator Forum Meetings!