Meeting Minutes
December 16, 2020 3:30pm

Lifesize Meeting: Link to meeting- https://call.lifesizecloud.com/6839517

Agenda

1) Call to Order and Introduction

Meeting called to order at 3:33pm with Grant Perkins.

Forum Members- Dale Johnson; Greg Reed; Grant Perkins; Thomas Georgi; Jim Kerr

2) Approval of Forum/NTC Minutes from September 3, 2020– Action Item

Jim Kerr- Motion to Approve

Greg Reed- Second

Unanimous

3) Elect Forum Vice Chair – Action Item

Brandon Garden- Mentioned that he would be willing to volunteer for the vice chair

Greg Reed- Motion to Approve

Dale Johnson- Second

Unanimous

4) Drinking Water Exam Results Overview:

a. Exam participants since Q3 Forum Meeting

Crystel Montecinos- Since the last meeting, there were 16 people that took the written exam for distribution. 9 of them passed and 7 failed. There were 10 who took the treatment exam and 5 passed and 5 failed. In the distribution 1 exams, 10 people took the exam and 7 passed. In the distribution 2 exams, 2 people too the exam and 1 passed and 1 failed. In the distribution 3 exam, 1 person took the exam and that person failed. In the distribution 4 exams, 3 people too the exam
Nevada Water and Wastewater Operator’s Forum

Hosted by: Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Safe Drinking Water
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and one passed. In the treatment 1 exams, 9 people took the exam and 5 passed. Treatment 2 exam, one person took it and that person failed. No one took the treatment 3 or 4 exams. In the distribution portion, the applicants struggled with equipment, insulation, operations, disinfection and maintenance. In treatment the applicants struggled with treatment and lab.

John Williams- Does anyone have any idea nationally what the average pass rate is?

Linh Kieu- Mentioned that normally we are at the 60% to 65% at our passing rate. 50% is lower than what we usually have as the passing rate.

Will Raymond- Commented that he thinks a lot of it has to do with the recommended reading and study materials. There is that expectation that there has got to be a direct application. There is a lot of training opportunities, but this year would have been difficult to sit down and focus because everything has been so difficult.

Grant Perkins- Mentioned that the areas that people struggled on the exams that it does make sense because some people can be an expert in some areas, but not all.

Will Raymond- Commented that Grant brings up a great point. Maybe we can do some onsite, hands-on training in 2021.

Grant Perkins- Agreed with Will Raymond. Mentioned that the hands-on training he took right before the exams, really helped him understand.

b. Exam Results (attached)

5) NWEA Updates / Wastewater Exam Results Review: Ashley Jacobson

Ashley Jacobson- There have been 106 exams for the year so far. 60 applicants did not pass. 30 of those 60 were restrictive grade 1. Obviously people could not due the hands on this last year due to COVID so there was more people that failed than normal. They are going to start doing virtual tours of the wastewater plants. The CEU’s now match the regulatory wastewater requirements.

6) NDEP / Bureau of Safe Drinking Water Updates: Crystel Montecinos / Linh Kieu

Linh Kieu- Introduced Crystel Montecinos will be leading the program now replacing Max Sosa. When COVID first started, they started the critical worker database. They were busy with that project around March and April. Since things ramped back up, we are finishing up that project now. Other than that, we are in our renewal season. We are all pretty busy right now. Working with Will with the next written exam.
John Williams- Asking about the computerized exams?

Linh Kieu- A lot of people are taking more computerized exams now, especially now with COVID. 50 to 60% of people are now taking the computerized exams now.

Andrea Seifert- Wanted to mention regarding the critical workers database that she has seen some questions from EPA recently. She did notice that there was a communication that went out with CA-NV AWWA regarding vaccinations. They are dealing with that at the emergency management level. She did see a message from Jennifer Carr this week as soon as we know more information that we will an email blast to all of the water systems. EPA also had some questions and concerns regarding water systems with construction, certain materials or chemicals. EPA is really trying to track all that carefully. If you do know anything and want to send her an email, please do. Especially if you see a problem in your area or other areas of the state.

7) NDEP / Bureau of Water Pollution Control Updates: Wastewater Regulations update

8) Training Needs/ Forum Input

Grant Perkins- Imagine that the training needs are all virtual. NVRWA has been doing a great job with virtual trainings.

John Williams- Mentioned that NVRWA has a bunch of stuff coming out. Beginning of 2021, they want to do an arsenic class that was requested by the EPA. They have a treatment class that will essentially be for grades 3 and 4. If anyone has any more ideas, please let them know.

Brandon Garden- Asked John if him or Stacey have been working on updating the information to make it a little more current? Some people are saying that have taken the NVRWA classes that it is the same material for many years.

John Williams- Answered from when he started in 2017, they try to update as they go. They try to reference the ABC updated need to know criteria. It is more of a presentation than a class. Thinks it is more of an adjustment of getting more class participation, but will definitely be trying to enhance our classes. We want to have more classes instead of trying to put so much into one class.

Stacey Van Diest- Mentioned what they would like to see is more pictures of our systems in NV. When they start to compile the content for the class where they don’t have much referencing for our own systems in NV so we see a lot of unfamiliar type pictures in the trainings.

Brandon Garden- Mentioned that anything that he can do to help provide that even though they are under COVID restrictions, we can try to get some operators to gather some pictures or overall plan layouts.
Stacey Van Diest - Said that John had mentioned briefly that they have been working on developing the Water Academy. Talking with the governor’s office and trying to put together the courses, the requirements, the credentialing, etc. when they are finally done, the program will be amazing. It is going to build our workforce. In the next couple of years, it will be a good turning point.

Round Table Discussion: What are we anticipating for 2021 Training and Testing? / NDEP

Grant Perkins - Mentioned that he would like to go back to in person training, but know it is difficult due to COVID.

Brandon Garden - Wants to know how many people join those trainings to actually learn something and not just to get a CEU?

John Williams - It is harder to do the training virtually because he doesn’t get the direct feedback as when they are doing in person trainings. He agrees with Grant that he would do in person trainings in a second. That being said, the number of people that are passing are looking good.

Grant Perkins - Understand that the number of people that are passing is a concern, but it is his understanding that is you get the passing score up to 70%, they change the test completely on you until it drops back down.

John Williams - Mentioned that he thought that if you answer enough correct questions, you don’t have to finish the test anymore.

Brian Heckathorn - Confirmed that is not true regarding getting the 70% and finishing the exam.

Linh Kieu - Answered that a lot more people that are receiving more than 70% so he is assuming that they are still taking the test. From what we see, people are taking the 100-110 questions.

Greg Reed - Asked if we have a sense on how many times will the written exams be offered?

Linh Kieu - Historically we have only offered it 3 times and we are still looking at that. The first exam is March 25th and the other two will be spaced throughout the year.

Greg Reed - Asked if Linh knew how long are these extra 10 questions are going to stay in the exams or are they permanent?

Linh Kieu - From what he has heard, it is permanent until they switch over to a new ABC format. Until they come out with a new one, he is assuming the 10 extra questions will be on there. We can email our ABC reps and see what they can do if anything.
Greg Reed- Mentioned that they biggest complaint that they have is the need-to-know criteria on the ABC website doesn’t coincide with what is on the exam.

Jim Kerr- Mentioned that he has 2 guys that have taken these exams multiple times and they are studying what is on the ABC websites and they are still struggling. He doesn’t know if the exams have changed or the criteria needs to be updated, but he thinks we need to look into that as well.

Linh Kieu- Stated that when Max was here, he said the need-to-know criteria was very specific. Maybe down the road a little bit, Crystel and I could look into this.

John Williams- Mentioned that he can send those ABC links to anyone for the wants them. The need-to-know criteria has updated with the new 2017 exams that are out now. It is a pretty impressive breakdown. There is a lot there now.

10) Forum Goals for 2021: Suggest items for Q1 Agenda / NDEP

Greg Reed- Mentioned that it is really hard to set any goals without knowing where we will be in 2021.

Andrea Seifert- Asked the larger utilities about their inhouse training programs?

Will Raymond- Answered that the most important thing that they have that the smaller utilities don’t is the state approved apprenticeship program. That brings a lot of resources that they put together. They have that luxury that they have 220 people on staff that they can-do in-house training and hands on training. People that are in our distribution crews who spend 40 hours in our laboratory. Thinks it is a good opportunity to help bring these resources. We would never be opposed to try and figure out a way to do socially distance offsite trainings.

Tom Georgi- Mentioned that they have been relying on a lot of WET classes and also the AWWA webinars to get contact hours.

Andrea Seifert- Asked if the staff feels like they are learning from the trainings? What is the feedback and your perspective?

Tom Georgi- Answered that a webinar is a webinar. They are there pretty much for the contact hours.

Will Raymond- Agrees that they are there for the contact hours and not really learning. There are some topics that are rock solid, but there have been webinars that he has went through and have had no idea what they are talking about, nor interested in. When it comes to pass the test and getting required knowledge, in his opinion, hitting the books and getting a lot of hands-on trainings is the most beneficial.
John Williams- Wants to have something that works with everyone. He would love to get together and socially distance some trainings if we can do it.

Andrea Seifert- Answered that might be things to consider next year. Mentioned that she liked how Will mentioned that maybe getting in the lab or training in your own facility. We really try to work on partnerships with the different utilities throughout the state. They find that is a real benefit. That might be a discussion throughout the next year and mentioned that the lead and copper rule revisions are coming out. That may impact the utilities because they will have to know the materials. You may want to make that a topic for the forum to talk about the early implementation items that may be a part of this final rule.

Will Raymond- Mentioned that they will be willing to do a live zoom class or hands on trainings that are safe to do, we can definitely facilitate whatever is needed.

John Williams- He will accept any help with any hands-on trainings.

A. Member’s Open Comments

   No Comments

B. Public Comments

   No Comments

C. Next Forum Meeting:

   Linh Kieu- Mentioned that we can send out an email with a poll asking when everyone is available.

   Greg Reed- Mentioned that usually the next one is at the conference.

   Stacey Van Diest- Said we can just put the forum in the conference schedule when we get it all figured out. They are planning a virtual and in person conference in May.

D. Adjourn

   Jim Kerr- Motion to adjourn
   Greg Reed- Second
   Unanimous

   Adjourned at 4:33pm