

# BECOMING A CERTIFIED WASTEWATER OPERATOR IN UTAH



**WATER QUALITY**

STATE OF UTAH  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY  
Revised 2024





That's it! Please call the Wastewater Operator Certification Program [\(385\) 600-9401](tel:3856009401) or [\(801\) 536-4344](tel:8015364344), or the Division of Water Quality at [\(801\) 536-4300](tel:8015364300) if you have questions. We may also be contacted by email at [wwopcert@utah.gov](mailto:wwopcert@utah.gov) or by mail. You can find more information on our website at <https://deq.utah.gov/water-quality/wastewater-operator-certification-program>.

Good luck on your next exam!!

In March 1991, following 20 plus years of a voluntary certification program, certification of wastewater works operators became mandatory. This booklet is compiled in an effort to answer questions most often asked by operators and is a supplement to the Rule for Certification of Wastewater Works Operators (R317-10). If you would like a copy of the Rule, it is available on our web site. If you have questions not answered by this booklet, please contact the Wastewater Operator Certification Program using the contact information below:

Wastewater Operator Certification Program  
DEQ/Division of Water Quality  
PO Box 144870  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4870

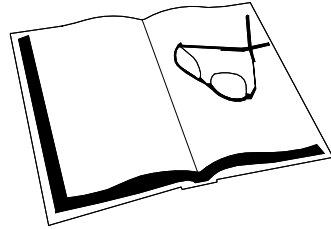
(385) 600-9401 or (801) 536-4344  
or (801) 536-4300

[wwopcert@utah.gov](mailto:wwopcert@utah.gov)

Our office is located in the  
Multi Agency State Office Building, DEQ 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
195 North 1950 West  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116

Wastewater Operator Certification Program at  
<https://deq.utah.gov/water-quality/wastewater-operator-certification-program>

## A FEW DEFINITIONS



**Facility classifications** are specified in the rules (Utah Administrative Code R317-10) and are too lengthy to include here. However, for collection and wastewater treatment operators there are four (4) grades of certification that correspond to the facility classification. In addition, for operators of small lagoon systems serving fewer than 3,500 people, who usually maintain both the Class I lagoon treatment system and the Class I collection system, there is only one (1) grade that combines treatment and collection. If the system changes classifications, operators are required to obtain certifications corresponding to the new classification.

**Direct responsible charge (DRC)** as defined in the rule, means "active on-site charge and performance of operation duties." Generally, direct responsible charge is taken by the chief operator or shift supervisors; however, a night shift operator or one who works as the sole operator will also have direct responsible charge of the system as they independently make decisions affecting system processes.

**Restricted Certificate** means a certificate issued when an operator passes a certification exam but doesn't meet all the other requirements (experience or education) to be certified at that grade.

## For example,

*Wastewater Operator Certification  
Program  
DEQ/Division of Water Quality  
PO Box 144870  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4870*

*Dear Council:*

*The Anyplace Sewer District is sponsoring a CPR/First Aid training course on Sept.1, 20\_\_ . The relevant details are as follows:*

*Name of course: CPR/First Aid training course*

*Sponsor: Utah Chapter of the Red Cross*

*Instructor: John Smith, EMT - Red Cross trainer*

*Subjects to be covered: Basic first aid, CPR techniques to include: first aid in treating burns, abrasions, fractures, differing types of wounds in addition to CPR techniques*

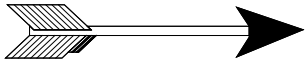
*Time allotment: 6 hour course; 3 hrs. of first aid, 3 hrs. of CPR*

*Other: Exam will be given at end of training; certification cards will be issued upon successful completion of exam*

*Please review and assign appropriate CEUs. If you require any additional information, please feel free to call.*

*Sincerely,*

*John Doe  
Anyplace Sewer District*

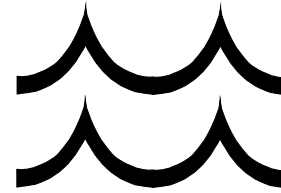


## CRITERIA FOR TRAINING COURSES

Any training courses, seminars, etc., that are "relevant" to the duties of a wastewater operator may be approved by the Certification Council for CEUs to be awarded. Pre-approval is not required, but detailed information should be submitted for consideration by the Certification Council which includes the following:

1. Name of course, subject(s) to be covered, and sponsor(s).
2. Date of the training event
3. An outline or agenda of the training course.
4. List the instructor(s) and qualifications for teaching the course.
5. Time involvement for each subject covered. (Minimum 1 hour wastewater related training for any individual to receive credit). Credit is not given for "breaks".
6. Is an exam offered at the end of the course?

After the training is held, a list of the attendees and corresponding documentation should be emailed to the Division of Water Quality's Wastewater Operator Certification Program at [wwopcert@utah.gov](mailto:wwopcert@utah.gov) so that the CEUs can be credited to each individual.



## ELIGIBILITY FOR WASTEWATER OPERATOR CERTIFICATION

To obtain regular certification, an operator must:

- Comply with the education and experience requirements for the certification grade for which the application is being made,
- File a properly completed application for the certification examination with the Wastewater Operator Certification Program by the application deadline,
- Pay the exam fee,
- Achieve a passing score on the certification examination (70% or higher), and
- Meet the residency requirement as set forth by HB 81 which went into effect July 1, 2009.

Not every operator is required to be certified under the mandatory certification law. Chief operators and supervisors who make process decisions for the system and are designated to be in direct responsible charge must be certified at the level of the facility classification. All other operators in direct responsible charge must be certified at no less than one grade lower than the facility classification or at the lowest possible classification in the case of Class I facilities.

## CERTIFICATES



Certificates are issued for the following categories:



- Wastewater Treatment Operator - Grades I through IV
- Restricted Wastewater Treatment Operator - Grades I through IV



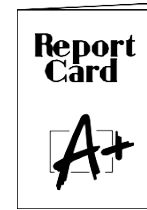
- Wastewater Collection System Operator - Grades I through IV
- Restricted Wastewater Collection System Operator - Grades I through IV



- Small Lagoon System Operator - Grade I - Wastewater Treatment/Collection System combined
- Restricted Small Lagoon System Operator - Grade I Wastewater Treatment/Collection System combined



- Grandfather certificates are for a specific facility at the classification and grade at which it existed on March 16, 1991. If the facility changes process or classification, the operator would be required to acquire the new certification through examination. Only renewal certificates may be issued now. Grandfather certificate holders are still required to fulfill the continuing education requirements.



## CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS (CEUs)

There are a lot of ways to get continuing education units in order to renew your certificate:

- Rural Water Association of Utah (RWAU) holds seminars throughout the state for water and wastewater operator training. Some of these classes (i.e., pumps or safety) may also count as CEUs for wastewater.
- There are correspondence courses available through California State University at Sacramento (CSUS) and other providers.
- Attending professional conferences may count toward your required CEUs.
- In-house training may also be used if it is approved.
- Training is also available through the Professional Wastewater Operators (PWO) of the Water Environment Association of Utah (WEAU).

Training obtained through RWAU, PWO, and WEAU are generally submitted directly to the Division of Water Quality for credit.

Visit <https://deq.utah.gov/water-quality/wastewater-exam-preparation-information-and-suggestions-wastewater-operator-certification-program> for more training resources.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION (CEU) REQUIREMENTS



- Continuing education is required to maintain your wastewater certificate. For Grades I and II, **2 CEUs** are required for renewal. For Grades III and IV, **3 CEUs** are necessary.
- Required CEUs must be earned during the 3-year period prior to the expiration date of the certificate.
- All CEUs are subject to review and approval to ensure that the training is related to the duties of a wastewater operator.
- Credit for a single training experience may be counted towards multiple certificates only if it is applicable to each type of certification.
- The minimum credit that will be entered into the certification database is 0.1 CEUs. Credit will be given for actual training time over that minimum for each training event (which may consist of multiple topics.) Generally, 1 hour of specialized training = 0.1 CEU (policy revised February 1, 2011.)



## EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS





- In order to qualify for a certificate "without" restrictions, all certification grades require twelve years of education (high school diploma or equivalency); **however**, experience may be substituted for education in Grades I and II only.
- A limited amount of relevant education, beyond a high school education or graduate equivalent degree can be substituted for experience for Grades II through IV.
- For all grades, a graduate equivalent degree is valid in lieu of a high school diploma.
- Training classes are not required prior to taking the certification examinations, but they are available and may be helpful.

## COMPREHENSIVE APPLICATION



## CERTIFICATE UPGRADE



-  The comprehensive application form is used to apply for exams, changes in status from restricted to unrestricted, and reciprocity requests.
-  When you complete this form, be sure to complete the Education Record and Description of Applicant's Duties on page 2 in detail.
-  If you are sending an application to the Division of Water Quality for the first time, you will need to include a Citizenship/Alien ID Certification form. We do not have access to other divisions' records, so we still need a copy for our files even if you have provided a citizenship form to other divisions. This document must be signed and notarized and include a copy of your *photo identification* (not just a photo).
-  The comprehensive application and the Citizenship/Alien ID Certification forms are found at <https://deq.utah.gov/water-quality/applications-and-forms-wastewater-operator-certification-program>.

If you would like to upgrade your certificate, all you need to do is complete an examination application and send it back to the Wastewater Operator Certification Program with the appropriate fee. Once you verify you are registered for the correct exam and the test date, location, and time, you just need to --

**PASS ANOTHER TEST!**

## CHANGE OF STATUS

### RESTRICTED TO UNRESTRICTED

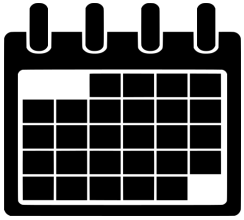
If you were issued a "restricted" certificate, but now meet all the education and/or experience requirements for your particular certification, you may submit a completed application, along with the appropriate fee, and an "unrestricted" certificate will be issued.

## CERTIFICATE REINSTATEMENT

Expired certificates may be reinstated only during the **one year** immediately following expiration. In order to reinstate your expired certificate you must:

- Have accumulated the required continuing education units *prior* to certificate expiration,
- Submit the completed renewal application within **one year** of expiration, and
- Pay the reinstatement fee along with the renewal fee.





## AFTER YOU ARE CERTIFIED

Certificates are valid for up to three years and must be renewed by December 31 of the year they expire. A renewal notice may be sent to you approximately four months prior to expiration, but if you don't receive one, please call the Wastewater Operator Certification Program. **You are responsible for renewing your certificate.**

### ***CERTIFICATE RENEWAL***

In order to renew your certificate, you must:

- Keep up your continuing education units;
- Earn the required CEUs prior to the expiration date;
- Submit completed renewal application prior to expiration;
- Have the required Citizenship / Alien ID Certification Form with copy of Photo ID on file with DWQ.
- Submit the renewal fee prior to expiration.

### ***PLEASE !!! LET US KNOW IF:***

- You change systems, employers, DRC status;
- You change your mailing address; or
- You change your name due to marriage or court order.



## RENEWAL APPLICATION



The renewal application form is only used for simple renewals or reinstatements. All other requests should be submitted using the comprehensive application form.



This form allows for late renewal (reinstatement) for lapsed certificates within 1 year of their expiration.



Before you renew, be sure to check that you have met the continuing education requirements for your certification. If you have not met the continuing education requirements prior to your certificate's expiration date, then you are not eligible for renewal.



The renewal application form is found at <https://deq.utah.gov/water-quality/applications-and-forms-wastewater-operator-certification-program>.

## CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION



### ***APPLYING FOR THE EXAMINATION***



**Paper-based examinations** are given in Spring and Fall in conjunction with Rural Water Association of Utah's Annual and Fall conferences. **Computer-based examinations** are offered on a continuous basis.



Application forms are available on the website at <https://deq.utah.gov/water-quality/applications-and-forms-wastewater-operator-certification-program>.



Complete the application and return it with the required fee in the mail or to [wwopcert@utah.gov](mailto:wwopcert@utah.gov). After your application has been processed, it will be placed on file. Check the web site or call our office to verify your registration.



### ***PROBLEMS***

***If for some reason you cannot take the exam, you may cancel your application before the application deadline and receive a refund of the exam fee or reschedule for the next exam date. After the deadline, no fee will be refunded unless another person is able to take your place for that exam.***



### ***EXAMINATION FEES***

Fees are charged for the examination, but only to cover the cost of the testing service. The cost is specified on the application form. Certification fees may be paid by cash, check, money order, or online using the Water Quality Shopping Cart.



### ***SPECIAL CASES***

Some operators know how to operate a plant but have difficulty passing a written exam. The Certification Council will respond to official ADA requests for modified testing conditions.

### ***WHO?***

Anyone may take any examination. However, the operator will not be qualified as a certified operator until all the conditions of the certificate are met. In other words, a "restricted" certificate will be issued.



### ***RECIPROCAL CERTIFICATION***

If you are certified in another state, planning on working in Utah, and would like to be certified, email an application to [wwopcert@utah.gov](mailto:wwopcert@utah.gov) stating your situation. If the other state has equivalent standards to Utah, the Certification Council may grant you certification after reviewing your application. A fee will be charged for your certificate by reciprocity.

If you are working in another state at the time of application and your application is approved, you will be sent a letter of intent to issue a certificate by reciprocity. When you begin working in Utah, provide proof of your employment to our office along with a copy of your current valid certificate from the other state, and you will be issued the certificate.