

Frequently Asked Questions

These questions and answers provide some additional information about the operator certification requirements for Other-than-Municipal (OTM) and Non-Transient Non-Community (NTNC) water systems.

1. When must I have a certified operator managing my system?

Beginning March 1, 2005, all OTM and NTNC water systems were required to have a certified operator managing their system. Systems may choose to have their own certified operator on staff or contract with a certified operator. For a list of businesses that provide contract services, visit the "Contract operators" tab at <http://dnr.wi.gov/regulations/opcert/smallWater.html#tabx5>.

2. What happens if I do not have a certified operator after March 1, 2005?

If an OTM or NTNC water system does not have a certified operator or does not contract with a business that provides certified operator services, the system will be out of compliance with the drinking water requirements, and the Department will begin enforcement action.

3. What if I lose my certified operator?

The owner of an OTM or NTNC water system must notify the Department of changes in the certified operator or operator-in-charge of the system. A system that loses an operator should immediately hire another certified operator or contract with a certified operator (see FAQ #1) to avoid an enforcement action. For this reason, it is advisable for all systems to have more than one certified operator.

4. What if my certified operator does not renew his or her certification?

If a system's certified operator fails to renew his or her certification prior to the expiration date printed on the certificate, the system is out of compliance with the drinking water regulations and subject to enforcement action. It is important for system owners to be aware of their certified operator's certification renewal date and continuing education training, to assure that the operator renews his or her certification promptly. It is advisable for all systems to have more than one certified operator.

5. What continuing education training courses are being offered currently?

The DNR contracts with the Wisconsin Rural Water Association (WRWA) to provide continuing education training courses for small system operators. The training courses offered through this contract address regulatory, operational, and sampling topics. WRWA notifies systems of upcoming training sessions, and a list is also available on WRWA's web site, at <http://www.wrwa.org/index.php/training/training-calendar>. These WRWA courses are the only acceptable continuing education courses for OTM and NN system operators.

6. What else do I need to know about continuing education training courses?

If one isn't offered, please remember to ask for a credit slip indicating that you took the continuing education training course, the number of credits you received, and the date(s) you attended training. Keep these continuing education credit slips in a safe place, because they are your proof of having earned six continuing education credits during your three year certification renewal period. Submit your credit slips to the DNR when renewing your operator certification. The DNR will send you a training reminder letter six months prior to your certification expiration date and a renewal reminder six to eight weeks prior to your expiration date (your end date is printed on your certificate).

7. When are certification exams offered?

Exams for OTM and NTNC water systems are offered twice each year, in May and November, typically on the first Wednesday of the month. A completed exam application and the \$25.00 exam fee must be submitted to the Department 28 days prior to the exam. The exam schedule and application forms are available on the DNR's web site; visit <http://dnr.wi.gov/regulations/opcert/smallWater.html> and follow the exam links on the righthand side.

8. Are there resources available to help me prepare for the exam?

Yes! The *Small Water System Operator Certification Manual* was specifically designed to meet the needs of OTM and NTNC operators seeking certification. This manual can be downloaded from DNR's web site, on the "Exam study options" tab at <http://dnr.wi.gov/regulations/opcert/smallWater.html#tabx2>. If you prefer to receive a hard copy in a three ring binder, contact Beth Goldowitz at 608-266-3484 or beth.goldowitz@wisconsin.gov.

9. Is there an exam preparation course available?

If you learn better with hands-on instruction in a classroom environment, Wisconsin Rural Water Association schedules small water system exam review courses prior to the May and November exam sessions. Check the WRWA web site for the training schedule, at <http://www.wrwa.org/index.php/training/training-calendar>.

10. Is there a fee to take the Small Water System Operator Certification exam?

Yes. The fee is \$25; send the payment with your completed application.

11. How do I renew my certification?

An operator certification must be renewed every 3 years. The DNR's Operator Certification program will send you a training reminder letter six months prior to your certification end date, and a renewal reminder six weeks before your certification end date (the date is printed on your certificate). Return the renewal reminder letter, proof of 6 hours of continuing education credits, and the renewal fee of \$45 to:

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Operator Certification & Licensing SS/7
PO Box 7921
Madison WI 53707-7921

12. What if I miss the renewal deadline?

You may still renew your certification within one year of your certificate renewal date. Submit your renewal reminder letter, proof of 6 hours of continuing education credits, the renewal fee of \$45, *plus* a \$25 late fee. It is important to realize, however, that if you do not renew your certification on time, the system you work for may be issued a violation for operating without a certified operator. If the system has a back-up certified operator, enforcement action will not occur. However, if you are the only certified operator for a water system, the day your certification expires, that system will be without a certified operator and the Department will begin enforcement action.

13. Where can I go for more information?

- **Lisa Bushby** is the Operator Certification Coordinator in the DNR's Bureau of Integrated Science Services. Lisa is responsible for organizing certification examinations, facilitating certification renewals, and approving and tracking continuing education for drinking water and wastewater operators. You can reach Lisa at 608-266-0498 or lisa.bushby@wisconsin.gov.
- **Beth Goldowitz** is the Operator Certification Coordinator in the DNR's Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater. Beth is responsible for coordinating the training and technical assistance

for municipal waterworks and small water systems. You can reach Beth at 608-266-3484 or beth.goldowitz@wisconsin.gov.

Lisa Bushby and Beth Goldowitz can help to answer your questions regarding examinations, renewals, continuing education credits, and training courses.

You can also visit our website, at <http://dnr.wi.gov/regulations/opcert/smallWater.html>, for more information about the Operator Certification Program.

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