



BUREAU OF WATER QUALITY
PROGRAM GUIDANCE

WASTEWATER POLICY MANAGEMENT TEAM

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
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Applicant Work Experience Requirements for Master Operator Applicants

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This document is intended solely as guidance and does not contain any mandatory requirements except where requirements found in statute or administrative rule are referenced. Any regulatory decisions made by the Department of Natural Resources in any matter addressed by this guidance will be made by applying the governing statutes and administrative rules to the relevant facts.

APPROVED:

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Date

Table of Contents	Page
1.0 Definitions.....	3
2.0 Acronyms.....	6
3.0 Applicability.....	6
4.0 Background.....	6
5.0 Applicant Work Experience Requirements for Master Operators.....	7
5.1 Standard Septage Certification Experience.....	8
5.2 Alternative Work Experience for Master Operator.....	10
5.3 Alternative Timeline for Achieving Master Operator Experience Hours.....	11
6.0 Department Application Review.....	12
7.0 Acknowledgements.....	12

1.0 Definitions

1. Department: means the Wisconsin department of natural resources (referenced from s. NR 113.03(12), Wis. Adm. Code).
2. Grade T master operator: operator that may conduct all aspects of septage servicing except land application and is eligible to be an operator-in-charge for a business that does not land apply (referenced from ss. NR 114.17 and NR 114.18, Wis. Adm. Code)
3. Grade L master operator: operator that may conduct all aspects of septage servicing including land application and is eligible to be an operator-in-charge for a business that land applies (referenced from ss. NR 114.17 and NR 114.18, Wis. Adm. Code)
4. Grease interceptor (aka grease trap): means a watertight receptacle designed to intercept and retain grease or fatty substances contained in kitchen and other food wastes (referenced from s. NR 113.03(21), Wis. Adm. Code). This term should not be confused with a receptacle for used grease collected from fryers (and similar cooking processes) and retained in onsite containers for removal/reuse.

A) Industrial/process grease interceptor (aka food processing grease): a watertight receptacle designed to intercept and retain grease that enters the interceptor from process piping (not sanitary plumbing).

Note: Industrial (process) grease is generated from large-scale food production. Numerous meat and poultry processors generate industrial/process grease. Grease generated by the industrial food production process enters a grease interceptor installed in or connected to process pipes, not sanitary plumbing pipes. Non-domestic septage (including process grease) is regulated pursuant to ch. NR 214, Wis. Adm. Code. In addition, process piping is not regulated by the plumbing code; therefore, this waste is exempt from ch. NR 113, Wis. Adm. Code requirements. This waste is regulated as an industrial sludge pursuant to s. NR 214.18, Wis. Adm. Code

B) Sanitary grease interceptor: a watertight receptacle designed to intercept and retain grease that enters the interceptor from sanitary plumbing in or from kitchens and restaurants. Sanitary grease contains human pathogens. See ch. NR 113, Wis. Adm. Code.

5. Holding tank: means an approved watertight receptacle for the collection and holding of sewage

A) Domestic holding tank: a watertight receptacle for the collection and holding of domestic wastewater [See definition of wastewater-domestic below]. (referenced from s. NR 113.03(26), Wis. Adm. Code).

B) Nondomestic or mixed (domestic + nondomestic) holding tank: a watertight receptacle for the collection and holding of nondomestic wastewaters or a mix of domestic/nondomestic wastewaters [See definition of wastewater-nondomestic below].

6. Land application or landspreading: means the spraying or spreading of septage onto the land surface, the injection of septage below the land surface, or the incorporation of septage into the soil, so that the septage can either condition the soil or fertilize crops or vegetation grown in the soil (referenced from s. NR 113.03(31), Wis. Adm. Code).
7. Private onsite wastewater treatment system: means a sewage treatment and disposal system serving a single structure with a septic tank and soil absorption field located on the same parcel as the structure. This term also means an alternative sewage system approved by the department including a substitute for the septic tank or soil absorption field, a holding tank, a system serving more than one structure, or a system located on a different parcel than the structure. A private sewage system may be owned by the property owner or by a special purpose district (referenced from s. 145.01(12), Wis. Stats.).

Note: The definition for a "Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment System" (POWTS), in s. SPS 381.01(194), Wis. Adm. Code (formerly s. Comm 81.01(194), Wis. Adm. Code), states that a POWTS has the same meaning as that given for a "private sewage system" defined under s. 145.01 (12), Wis. Stats. The statutory definition of a private sewage system includes broad language that the Department of Natural Resources and Department of Safety and Professional Services have interpreted and clarified in interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The definition of a POWTS, and a "Large POWTS", and applicable regulatory procedures are based on the following general factors: type of wastewater, type of discharge into the environment, and size of system ("large" vs. "small").

8. Publicly owned (wastewater) treatment work: means a treatment works which is owned by a municipality and any sewers that convey wastewater to such a treatment works. This definition includes any devices or systems used by a municipality in the storage, treatment, recycling, and reclamation of municipal sewage or liquid industrial wastes. The term also means the municipality or local unit of government which has jurisdiction over the indirect discharges to, and the discharges from, such a treatment works (referenced from s. NR 211.03(11), Wis. Adm. Code).
9. Portable restroom: means fixtures, incorporating holding tank facilities, designed to directly receive human excrement. Portable restrooms are self-contained units, may be designed for one or more person's use at a given time and are readily transportable (referenced in s. NR 113.03(41), Wis. Adm. Code).
10. Privy: means a cavity in the ground or a portable above-ground device constructed for toilet uses which receive human excrement either to be partially absorbed directly by the surrounding soil or stored for decomposition and periodic removal (referenced in s. NR 113.03(43), Wis. Adm. Code).

Note: Wis. Stats. s. 281.48(2)(c) defines "privy" as an enclosed nonportable toilet into which human wastes not carried by water are deposited to a subsurface storage chamber that may or may not be watertight.

11. Septage: means the wastewater or contents of septic or holding tanks, dosing chambers, grease interceptors, seepage beds, seepage pits, seepage trenches, privies, or portable restrooms (referenced from s. NR 113.03(55), Wis. Adm. Code).

Note: This does not include non-domestic wastewater (non-domestic examples include, but are not limited to, process grease, car wash waste, catch basin waste, etc.) regulated pursuant to s. NR 214.02(1) and (3)(c), Wis. Adm. Code.

12. Servicing: means removing the scum, liquid, sludge, or other wastes from a private sewage system such as septic or holding tanks, dosing chambers, grease interceptors, seepage beds, seepage pits, seepage trenches, privies, or portable restrooms and properly disposing or recycling of the contents as provided in ch. NR 113 (referenced from s. NR 113.03(57), Wis. Adm. Code).

13. Wastewater-Domestic: means wastewater originating solely from human and domestic activities such as sanitary, bath, laundry, dishwashing, garbage disposal, and the cleaning of domestic areas or utensils. Wastewater from restaurants is considered domestic wastewater. [clarified pursuant to DSPPS (DComm) and DNR Memo of Understanding dated December 16, 1999].

14. Wastewater-Non-Domestic: means wastes collected from non-residential garages used for storage, maintenance, or washing of motor vehicles, commercial food processing, commercial laundromats, animal shelters or kennels, animal rendering, metal fabricating, electronic component manufacturing, chemical manufacturing, milkhouses and include other industrial and commercial process water. [clarified pursuant to DSPPS (DComm) and DNR Memo of Understanding dated December 16, 1999].

15. Wastewater Treatment Facilities: means facilities that are permitted through the WPDES program to accept and treat septage, and may include, POTWs.

Note: Section NR 205.03(43m), Wis. Adm. Code defines "Wastewater treatment facility" as "all the structures, pipes, and other equipment that constitute the various treatment processes and treatment units employed to reduce pollutants in wastewater."

2.0 Acronyms

1. DNR: Department of Natural Resources
2. DSPTS: Department of Safety and Professional Services (former Dept. of Commerce-DComm)
3. MO: Master Operator
4. MP: Master Plumber
5. MPRS: Master Plumbers Restricted Service
6. OIC: Operator-in-Charge
7. POTW: Publicly Owned Treatment Works or Publicly Owned Wastewater Treatment Works
8. POWTS: Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment System
9. PSAI: Portable Sanitation Association International

3.0 Applicability

This guidance document outlines applicant work experience requirements for obtaining a septage master operator (MO) certification. These requirements apply to both Grade T (treatment) and Grade L (landspreading) certified operators for becoming a master operator.

4.0 Background

Septage businesses in the State of Wisconsin that service and/or dispose of septage (contents from septic tanks, holding tanks, grease interceptors, portable restrooms, privies, etc.) are required to be licensed pursuant to ch. NR 113, Wis. Adm. Code. All individuals servicing septage, with the exception of portable restroom servicing assistants, are required to be properly certified under the following designations: operator-in-training, certified septage vehicle operator, and/or master operator (MO) pursuant to ch. NR 114, Wis. Adm. Code. Each vehicle and/or trailer used for servicing of septage must be inspected and properly licensed pursuant to ch. NR 113, Wis. Adm. Code.

Each septage business must designate a certified master operator as the OIC for the business per s. NR 114.18, Wis. Adm. Code. A “grade T” MO may conduct all aspects of septage servicing except land application. A “grade L” MO may conduct all aspects of septage servicing including

land application. The licensed septage business may only perform aspects corresponding to the OIC grade designation.

In order for a septage certified operator to become a MO, the individual must complete the following tasks:

Grade T MO Expectations	Grade L MO Expectations
Submit a 1600-hour experience statement to the DNR for review and approval.	Submit a 1600-hour experience statement to the DNR for review and approval.
Pass MO “Grade T” exam	Pass MO “Grade T” and “Grade L” exams
Pay applicable fees	Pay applicable fees

Note: Per s. NR 114.18 (2), Wis. Adm. Code: “Persons shall accrue at least 1600 hours of experience working in their designated grade certification over at least one calendar year, participate in a mandatory training class sponsored by the department and pass an examination associated with that class in order to become certified as a master operator.”

In 2014 representatives from the Wisconsin Liquid Waste Carriers Association (WLWCA) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) developed guidelines to clearly establish DNR expectations for an applicant’s 1600-hour experience statement. The industry and the department collaborated to ensure applicants are qualified to conduct and oversee all aspects of septage servicing per chs. NR 113 and 114, Wis. Adm. Code. These guidelines establish a streamlined and clarified application submittal process as well as the department review and approval process.

Note: In January 2020, DNR representatives reformatted this document to meet the department guidance recertification procedures to comply with the 2017 ACT 369 requirements.

5.0 Applicant Work Experience Requirements for Master Operators

The applicant shall show proof of the work experience so that the department is adequately able to determine if the actual work experience meets the minimum MO requirements. Work experience is categorized into:

- Standard septage certification experience,
- Alternative (related) work experience, and
- Alternative timeline for achieving MO experience hours.

The department will primarily consider work experience within the previous five calendar years unless the applicant is:

- A. able to show that the applicant has maintained appropriate certifications, credentials, and appropriate continuing education, and

- B. able to demonstrate adequate qualifications and knowledge of the industry and department expectations.

Note: Work experience beyond the previous five calendar years will be scrutinized in detail by the department's Septage Certification Coordinator.

5.1 Standard Septage Certification Experience

Each master operator (MO) applicant shall provide notarized certification statements of work experience and proof of work experience in the following manner:

1. Detailed Explanation of Knowledge and Experiences. The MO applicant shall submit a notarized certification statement that explains duties performed including documenting time and experience with compliance with chs. NR 113 and NR 114, Wis. Adm. Code. The notarized statement shall include:
 - a. The number of hours of experience servicing, hauling, and disposing of (POTWS, landspreading, etc.) septage. The hours shall have been earned over at least one calendar year.
 - b. A listing of septage businesses where the Master Operator applicant was employed including:
 - i. Name of the septage business,
 - ii. Address of the septage business,
 - iii. Phone number of the septage business,
 - iv. Contact person at the septage business, and
 - v. Dates of employment at the septage business.
 - c. A description of regular duties performed in compliance with chs. NR 113 and NR 114, Wis. Adm. Code.
 - d. A list of any additional certifications or licenses held by the Master Operator applicant (i.e. POWTS maintainer, plumber licenses, certified soil tester, PSAI, etc..) and how long these certifications or licenses were held.
 - e. A list of any additional certifications or licenses currently in progress.
 - f. A signature and date of signature of the MO applicant.
 - g. A notarized signature, date, and stamp.

Note: The MO applicant is reminded that the certification statement communicates to the department that the applicant is prepared to be a Master Operator and is able to operate a septage business in compliance with chs. NR 113 and NR 114, Wis. Adm. Code. Further, the applicant is reminded to be specific in the statement, and to include all relevant information associated with the septage work experience.

2. Work Experience Documentation. The Master Operator applicant must demonstrate work experience within the septage industry. The applicant shall provide at least one of the following to meet these requirements.

Note: The department will primarily review experience through the last five calendar years as proof of work experience or when requesting alternative experience hours.

Work experience beyond the previous five calendar will be further scrutinized by the department's Septage Certification Coordinator.

- a. **Septage Logs:** A photocopy of septage logs showing a minimum of 50 entries completed by the applicant as a certified operator. The logs shall show required information relating to servicing, testing, and disposal of septage. The photocopy shall be signed by the applicant and notarized. A signed certification by the operator-in-charge pursuant to s. NR 113.11 (3) (c) 3. g., Wis. Adm. Code shall be included on the log or attached to the log entries.

Note: If the applicant applies to be a Grade L operator, then the applicant must provide photocopies of septage logs including the land application of septage.

- b. **Employer Statement:** The applicant's employer(s), past and present, shall submit a notarized certification statement detailing the number of hours of septage employment experience gained with the employer. Start and end dates of the applicant's employment shall be included. Experience from the previous five years will be primarily used in the department's evaluation. Work experience beyond the previous five calendar will be further scrutinized by the department's Septage Certification Coordinator. In addition, the employer(s) shall provide a listing of work experience activities and septage disposal methods typically performed by the applicant during their work experience.
 - i. Work experience may include, but is not limited to:
 1. Completing county maintenance reports,
 2. Servicing septic and pump tanks,
 3. Servicing domestic holding tanks,
 4. Servicing sanitary grease interceptors,
 5. Servicing portable restrooms and/or privies,
 6. Completing daily logs,
 7. Completing and submitting land application site requests,
 8. Entering and submitting Other Method of Disposal or Distribution Reports (form 3400-052), and
 9. Entering and submitting Annual Land Application Reports (form 3400-055) if grade appropriate.
 - ii. Disposal methods include but are not limited to:
 1. Publicly owned wastewater treatment works disposal,
 2. Injection practices,
 3. Incorporation practices, and
 4. pH treatment practices.
- c. **County Verification:** A MO applicant must provide verification from county sanitary personnel (counties listed by the applicant) indicating that the applicant serviced private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS) within the counties listed. The verification shall be on the county's letterhead or be sent from the county's email system showing authenticity. The verification shall include:
 - i. Administrator name,

- ii. Title,
 - iii. County name,
 - iv. Office address,
 - v. Phone number, and
 - vi. Email Address.
- d. Alternative Documentation: Alternative documentation to show proof of work experience within the septage industry may be accepted by the department. However, work experience beyond the previous five calendar will be further scrutinized by the department's Septage Certification Coordinator (See Section 5.2 and 5.3 below). All documentation directly submitted by the applicant shall be signed and notarized. Alternative documentation procedures are subject to approval by the department.

5.2 Alternative Work Experience for Master Operator

The department may grant alternative experience toward meeting the required 1600-hour work experience requirements of MO applicants as required pursuant to s. NR 114.18 (2), Wis. Adm. Code. The MO applicant shall submit in writing to the department the applicant's desire to apply for alternative experience hours toward the 1600-hour requirement and include the necessary information as listed below:

1. The total maximum number of equivalent hours shall not exceed 500 hours. Hours can be gained from the categories below but may not exceed the maximum equivalent hours.
2. Certified Soil Testers or Professional Soil Scientists (licensed through DSPS) may request up to 100 equivalent work experience hours by:
 - a. Conducting 50 soil/site evaluation reports over the preceding five calendar years;
 - b. Providing a list showing the names and legal descriptions of the soil/site evaluation reports; and
 - c. Providing county sanitary contact information to the department so that the department can verify that the 50 sanitary permits were approved in the proper manner. The county sanitary contact information shall include:
 - i. Administrator name,
 - ii. Title,
 - iii. County name,
 - iv. Office address,
 - v. Phone number, and
 - vi. Email address.
3. Master Plumbers (MP) or Master Plumbers Restricted Service (MPRS) (credentialed through DSPS) may request up to 400 equivalent work experience hours by:
 - a. Conducting 50 private onsite wastewater treatment system (POWTS) installations where the applicant is the responsible plumber.
 - b. Providing county sanitary contact information to the department so that the department can verify that the 50 sanitary permits were approved in a proper manner. The county sanitary contact information shall include:
 - i. Administrator name,
 - ii. Title,
 - iii. County name,

- iv. Office address,
- v. Phone number, and
- vi. Email address.
- c. Provide one of the following sets of documents:
 - i. A listing showing the POWTS owner names, sanitary permit numbers, and tax parcel IDs of the sanitary permits for the POWTS installations; or
 - ii. Photocopies of the State Sanitary hard card or photocopies of the approved sanitary permit application.
- 4. Journeyman Plumbers or Journeyman Plumbers Restricted Service (credentialed through DSPS) may request up to 100 work equivalent hours by:
 - a. Actively participating in 25 POWTS installations.
 - b. Providing county sanitary contact information to the department so that the Department can verify that the 25 sanitary permits were approved in a proper manner. The county sanitary contact information shall include:
 - i. Administrator name,
 - ii. Title,
 - iii. County name,
 - iv. Office address,
 - v. Phone number, and
 - vi. Email address.
 - c. Provide a list showing the POWTS owner names, sanitary permit numbers, and tax parcel IDs of the sanitary permits for the POWTS installations.

5.3 Alternative Timeline for Achieving Master Operator Experience Hours

When alternative experience is used toward meeting the 1600-hour experience requirement, the timeframe over which the experience is gained can be reduced. The difference between the number of hours required and the number of alternative hours can be divided over the 1600-hour requirement. This ratio is multiplied by the 1-year timeframe to achieve a reduced timeframe for which the applicant can achieve the actual experienced hours gained.

$$[(1600 \text{ hours} - \text{alternative hours}) / 1600 \text{ hours}] \times 1 \text{ calendar year}$$

Example 1:

A Master Plumber (MP) with 50 sanitary permits requests alternative experience toward the 1600-hour requirement. The MP provides documentation of the 50 sanitary permits by providing sanitary permit approvals from the two local counties. A phone conversation between the Department staff and the two county sanitarians confirm that the 50 sanitary permits were properly submitted and approved. A credit of 400 hours is provided toward the 1600-hour credit requirement reducing the needed operator experience to 1200 hours. Because the requirement for additional work experience is reduced, the timeframe for achieving the work experience hours can be reduced at the same ratio.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Minimum Timeframe} &= [(1600 \text{ hours} - 400 \text{ hours}) / 1600 \text{ hours}] \times 1 \text{ calendar year} \\ &= 0.75 \times 12 \text{ months} \\ \text{Minimum Timeframe} &= \underline{9 \text{ months}} \end{aligned}$$

6.0 Department Application Review

Upon receiving the MO experience application, the Septage Certification Coordinator will within 30 calendar days review the application for completeness. The department shall review each submitted document and verify that the applicant's submitted materials meet the minimum submittal requirements as listed above. In addition, pursuant to s. NR 114.18 (2), Wis. Adm. Code, the department may verify information submitted on a case-by-case basis when evaluating MO applications.

If the MO experience application is found incomplete or is unable to verify the information submitted within the 30 days, the Septage Certification Coordinator will contact the applicant and return the MO experience application with a written explanation (email) as to why the MO experience application is incomplete or unverifiable.

1. If the MO experience application is significantly incomplete and unlikely able to supplement adequately to achieve completeness, then the Septage Certification Coordinator will return the MO experience application.
2. If the MO experience application is slightly incomplete and the Septage Certification Coordinator believes minor supplemented information may make the MO experience application complete, then the Septage Certification Coordinator may temporarily retain the application. However, if the Septage Certification Coordinator after contacting the applicant believes the application is no longer able to be supplemented due to inactivity by the applicant, then the Septage Certification Coordinator will return the incomplete application, and document in writing that the application has been returned for a lack of completeness.

If the application is found adequate, then the MO experience application will be accepted. The department Septage Certification Coordinator will document the acceptance in ELC and notify the MO applicant.

Pursuant to s. NR 114.21, upon satisfactory fulfillment of the qualifications and payment for the MO application the department shall issue the MO certification indicating the operator grade for which the applicant has qualified.

7.0 Acknowledgements

This guidance document was originally developed by Matt Alft (WLWCA), John Bowen (WLWCA), Alan Kaddatz (WLWCA), Katie Boycks (Klaetsch Public Affairs Strategies, LLC), George Klaetsch (Klaetsch Public Affairs Strategies, LLC), Matt Moroney (DNR), Kelly Thompson (DNR), and Fred Hegeman (DNR). This document was updated to meet 2017 Act 369 requirements (February 2020) by Rachel Angel, Fred Hegeman, Kate Hanson, Steve Warrner, and Yu Zhuang. For any questions regarding this guidance document, please contact Fred Hegeman (Wastewater Septage Team Co-Coordinator) or Steve Warrner (Wastewater Septage Team Co-Coordinator).



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES NOTICE OF FINAL GUIDANCE & CERTIFICATION

Pursuant to ch. 227, Wis. Stats., the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has finalized and hereby certifies the following guidance document.

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WY-20-0013

DOCUMENT TITLE

Applicant Work Experience Requirements for Master Operator Applicants

PROGRAM/BUREAU

Water Quality

STATUTORY AUTHORITY OR LEGAL CITATION

Chapters NR 113 and NR 114, Wis. Adm. Code.

DATE SENT TO LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU (FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS)

02/10/2020

DATE FINALIZED

03/03/2020

DNR CERTIFICATION

I have reviewed this guidance document or proposed guidance document and I certify that it complies with sections 227.10 and 227.11 of the Wisconsin Statutes. I further certify that the guidance document or proposed guidance document contains no standard, requirement, or threshold that is not explicitly required or explicitly permitted by a statute or a rule that has been lawfully promulgated. I further certify that the guidance document or proposed guidance document contains no standard, requirement, or threshold that is more restrictive than a standard, requirement, or threshold contained in the Wisconsin Statutes.

Signature

3/3/2020

Date

