



Office of Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance

Operator Certification for Noncommunity Water Supplies

FACT SHEET

Overview

In an effort to improve the safety of public drinking water systems through compliance with operation, maintenance, and sampling requirements, amendments to the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) require that certain public water supplies (PWS) have a certified operator. The SDWA and rules (*Part 19*) require certified drinking water operators for all nontransient noncommunity (NTNC) water supplies and for transient noncommunity systems that employ certain water treatment processes. Examples of NTNC supplies include schools, daycares, and factories.

Certified Operator Information

Certified operator means an “operator of a public water supply who holds a certificate.” The operator may be the owner of a PWS or the person designated by the owner as the responsible individual for overall charge of the water system. This person makes decisions regarding the daily operation of the supply that could directly impact the quality and quantity of the drinking water being supplied.

Certified Operator Responsibilities

The operator is the one who:

- Arranges for repairs or disinfection in the case of a problem with the supply, or for bottled water if an alternate temporary supply is necessary.
- Ensures that the sampling is being done on schedule and reported to the local health department (LHD) as required.
- Makes sure that the PWS records are available and up to date and that all public notices are properly posted.
- Implements the contingency plan in the event of a problem and is the primary contact for the LHD in any matter regarding the supply.

Operator Certification Procedure

For an individual to become a certified drinking water operator, they must do the following:

1. Complete and mail an exam application to the Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) Office of Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance, Operator Training and Certification program. The application must be received by the DEQ not less than 45 days before the announced examination date. There is a \$45 per exam fee to take a Level 5 exam and the only requirement to take the exam is a high school diploma or GED equivalency.
2. Pass the exam prepared by the DEQ with a score of 70 percent or better. Persons passing the exam will receive a certification indicating their operator identification number and expiration date. They also receive an *unrestricted* certificate, which allows them to operate at more than one noncommunity public water supply.

Continuing Education and Renewal of Certificates

All operators will need to complete continuing education in order to renew their certificates and remain certified. Operator certifications are valid for three years. Within that three-year period, Noncommunity Level 5 operators in Michigan are required to obtain a minimum of nine hours of DEQ-approved continuing education credits (CEC) or 0.9 CECs. The operator is responsible for submitting their renewal paperwork and renewal fee of \$95 (for the Level 5 certification) to the DEQ every three years.

Classification of Treatment System

Noncommunity systems are classified in accordance with the source of water, level of treatment, and scope of distribution as **F**, **D**, and **S**. Operators must be certified at a level equal to or greater than the classification level of the water system.

S is for distribution systems with no treatment at all or treatment that does not require public health related oversight. Examples include: conventional ion exchange softening; sediment or carbon filters; reverse osmosis; and distillation.

D is for systems with limited treatment. This includes any chemical treatment of the supply for either (1) public health reasons, or (2) where chemicals are being injected that, if misused, could put the public at risk. Examples include: systems that inject chemicals such as chlorine or phosphate, and any system used to meet a maximum contaminant level.

F is for systems using surface water or groundwater under the direct influence of surface water or any system with complete treatment.

For Certification Information

The following information is available on the DEQ's Drinking Water Operator Training and Certification program Web site, under the Drinking Water heading at <http://www.michigan.gov/deqoperatortraining>:

1. Exam application and study guide.
2. List of approved courses for CECs.
3. Searchable database to check your CEC status.

For General Information

Questions regarding any of the information in this fact sheet should be directed to your LHD.