



Operator Certification Committee Meeting

Wednesday, April 3, 2024 · 2:00 – 3:00pm

Google Meet joining info

Video call link: meet.google.com/dqh-mugr-bhe

Purpose of Meeting: Updates on Advanced Water Purification roadmap and operator certification and the Op Cert Program’s workforce outreach efforts, including expanding testing locations in Arizona.

Committee Members Present:

- Dawn Simpson - Sunstate Environmental, Small Public Water System & Committee Chair
- Mike Osborne - Town of Marana, Wastewater Collection Grade 4 & Committee Co-Chair
- Tina Pico – WW Op Cert Program Coordinator & Executive Secretary
- Art Nunez - EPCOR, Water Treatment Grade 4
- Eboni Rhone – DW Op Cert Program Coordinator & Executive Secretary
- Rich Marsh –Town of Welton, Appointed Municipal Official
- Roman Diaz - Director of the Water Resources and Environmental Science Technology Program at Gateway Community College
- Blake Anderson - Remote Operator Representative
- Fred Kreiss - Cactus State Water, Investor-owned water/wastewater facility

Committee Members Who Sent Regrets:

- Rob McCandless - Stantec, Professional Engineer
- Anupa Jain - City of Chandler, Water Distribution Grade 4
- Jason Joynes - Wastewater Treatment Grade 4

ADEQ Representative:

- Jason Bobko - Engineering, TA, Op Cert Unit Manager
- Laura Carusona - Sr. Environmental Program Manager
- Dean Moulis - Wastewater Treatment Senior Engineer
- Bram Briskorn - TA/ DW Op Cert Program Coordinator
- Shivani Shah - Environmental Engineer Specialist III
- Rhona Mallea - Project Manager, Water Quality Division
- Heidi Welborn - Legal Specialist, Drinking Water Section

Call to Order: Eboni Rhone called to order the regular meeting of the Certification Committee at 2:01PM through the virtual platform, Google Meet.

Roll Call: 7 of the 11 committee members were present. Per Arizona Administrative Code Title 18, Chapter 5, Article 1, Section 103(F), the quorum was met and the meeting continued as scheduled.

General Business: Review of October 19th meeting.

New Business:

Advanced Water Purification (AWP) Roadmap

- Rhona and Shivani provide a brief overview of AWP.
- Working with California/Nevada AWWA branch to obtain their operator exam for AWP/DPR certifications. Customize for Arizona needs.
- Concerns from committee member that wastewater operators will be left out as the AWP/DPR certification requires a Water Treatment Grade 3/4 certification.

Workforce Outreach

- Career fairs have successful engagement and could lead to new employment. Mixed results from the committee members.
- Push to reach high schoolers is needed/wanted.
 - Eboni is meeting with ADEQ's Youth Outreach Coordinator and will follow up with the committee. Participation from operators and systems is critical.
- Question proposed by committee: How can we prepare high schoolers for this workforce when Arizona Administrative Code R18-5-112(D)(1) states you must have a high school diploma or equivalent to test for a Grade 1 certification?
 - Internships and Apprenticeships were proposed. This effort would need to be led by the municipalities.

Open Discussion from Committee

- Training follow by testing was requested.
 - To uphold the integrity of the operator certification, ADEQ contracted with ABC.
- Testing locations fill up quickly. The Op Cert Program is working on a third exam proctor to offer the ABC exams on behalf of ADEQ.
- West-Mec/GateWay Community College: efforts underway to assist utilities and operators with the basics for water/waster knowledge.
- Operators typically have to choose between work or training due to time constraints.

- Cactus State: Working to attracting new talent for 40+ more systems. Staying in compliance and diligent of exceedances and new regulation is essential.

Next Meeting: The Certification Committee will receive a Doodle Poll to vote on the next meeting in 2024.

Meeting Adjourned at 3:00PM

Minutes Approved By: Jason Bobko, Manager, Safe Drinking Water Engineering Review, Technical Assistance and Operator Certification Unit

Minutes Submitted By: Eboni Rhone, Operator Certification Program Coordinator