

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
CERTIFICATION PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
For Water and Wastewater Systems Operators  
June 18, 2009  
Meeting Minutes**

**Advisory Committee Members Present**

John Ackerman, Chairman  
Jerry Brown  
David Eisenberger  
Edward Gulick  
Darrel Hutchinson  
Dale Runkle  
Michael Sienkiewicz  
Sophie Simon  
David Smith  
Gary Witmeyer  
Paul Zielinski

**Advisory Committee Members Absent**

Barbara Canfield  
Jeffrey Culton  
Michael Henry  
Doug Pike  
Jeffrey Staul  
Jesse Weiss

**DEP Employees Present**

Nicki Kasi  
Gary Moyer  
Scott Sykes  
Janette Washington  
Cheri Sansoni

Chairman John Ackerman called the Certification Program Advisory Committee (CPAC) meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Training Room of the Rachel Carson State Office Building.

**Approval of April 23, 2009 Minutes**

Michael Sienkiewicz motioned to approve the April 23, 2009 meeting minutes. Ed Gulick seconded. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

**Operator Certification External Program Review**

Nicki Kasi provided an overview of a discussion she had with the State Board for Certification of Water and Wastewater Systems Operators (Board) concerning the external review. The Board asked CPAC to reconsider their decision to not look at the enforcement and compliance component of the program. They also recommended that CPAC take a look at the available resources of the program and the effective use of those resources. Finally, they wanted input as to whether members of CPAC thought that a subclass for Land Application was warranted for wastewater system operators. She also wanted input from CPAC members as to the merit of also splitting the Ultraviolet Subclass into two subclasses, one for surface water treatment and one for ground water treatment.

After some discussion, CPAC still felt there wasn't enough of an enforcement and compliance program in place to evaluate and that final regulations are needed before moving forward with any form of an evaluation. Nicki Kasi also agreed to look into the

possibility of obtaining an outside contractor come in and complete an evaluation of the resources used for program implementation.

Some of the comments of members on what is involved with land application and sprayer irrigation included the following:

- Is it biosolids
- Treated before spraying
- Does it include storage
- Agriculture Issues
- Tie to CWA/NPDES – Stream proximity
- Buffers
- Spraying – consumptive use – water allocations
- Brine waters – Oil and Gas
- Well drilling – wellhead protection
- Impact to on-lot systems
- W/NPES Permits – Inactive
- Number of systems using
- Not a treatment - discharge
- Effluent limits – pumping systems

Based on this discussion, members concluded that most of this wasn't relevant to an operator's duties. Treatment used to get to point of spray is covered by other subclasses. Therefore, the recommendation was to not create a new subclass.

In addition, CPAC members came to the conclusion that a separate subclass for Ultraviolet light was not needed, since the key is to deactivate organisms. It is a low-level, simple treatment regardless of the source of water where the operators' responsibilities are the same. A separate subclass is not needed.

Nicki Kasi needs subject matter experts to rewrite the Ultraviolet and Ozone exams for drinking water. Paul Zielinski volunteered. .

Nicki Kasi informed the Committee that Board did not renew the Association of Boards of Certification Contract. This contract was in place to help with the compilation and scoring of exams. The exams have been rewritten and will be ready for testing in August.

The Board also has received comments that the Conversion Chart with formulas used during exams needs to be reviewed and updated with new formulas. Nicki Kasi asked if CPAC members would be willing to review this document and provide recommendations on how it can be improved. She asked that comments be sent to her within one week.

## **Scope of Work Document**

Gary Moyer and Scott Sykes presented the Scope of Work on the PA Operator Certification Program External Review. A series of questions that the External Review should answer was finalized:

### **Status/Trends**

1. What data do we currently collect?
2. Do we have all the trend data we need?
3. What does this data tell us?
4. What additional data should we collect and track?
5. Is there any correlation between the testing statistics and training?
6. Who is going to use data and how?
7. What problems exist in accessing information and how should we address?
8. Retention rate?
9. Why don't operators renew?

### **Outreach/Stakeholder Involvement**

1. Are stakeholders aware of the Operator Certification Program, Regulations, and DEP Operator Website?
2. Can the DEP Website be better utilized to enhance guidance?
3. Is Earthwise Academy useful in tracking continuing education contact hours and DEP training courses?
4. Were the Workshops introducing the op-cert program and grandparenting useful and should there be more?
5. What is the primary source of information to operators?
6. Should we develop handouts, fact sheets, pamphlets?
7. How accessible are DEP Program Staff?
8. Effective/response time and satisfaction level?

### **Methods for Program Review**

The methodology for the external review was discussed included doing the following

- Completing a separate survey for water and wastewater operators
- Surveying examinees at the time of examination.
- Sending an email survey to Training Providers
- Asking training providers to have attendees complete a survey designed to solicit additional input on the effectiveness of the training program.
- Including a survey to owners with the next Available Operator Report mailing.
- Sending all current certified operators a survey by direct mail
- Sending a mailing to all operators that did not renew to quantify why they chose not to renew their certificate.

The release of the surveys would be phased to allow for compilation of data and results. Suggestions were to put the survey on our website and give one hour of continuing education to certified operators for completing it. DEP staff will need to look at survey mechanisms and check with our IT and training staff to see if this is possible. The survey

should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete, possibly two pages, with 10-20 questions minimum. The font on the surveys should be at least 11 point Ariel/Times New Roman. Additional space should be provided to allow additional comments.

It was decided the final report will tie findings to three categories:

- Findings on Program Acceptability
- Findings on Program Understanding
- Findings on Program Quality

The Committee then reviewed the Operator Certification Program Draft Common Survey to identify which questions should be directed towards the owners, operators, examinees, trainers, trainees.

### **Timeline**

- Finalize the survey- email to members and organize a conference call for either July 15, 2009 or July 22, 2009.
- Conduct survey/collect data
- Results compilation by December 31, 2009
- Mail survey to operators by August 1, 2009
- Deadline for submittal by August 31, 2009
- Survey Examinees in August and October; compile by October 31.
- All data in by November 1, 2009

Nicki Kasi revisited the issue of adding Enforcement and Compliance to the external review and a motion was made by John Ackerman not to include Enforcement and Compliance. David Eisenberger seconded. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

John Ackerman adjourned the meeting at 2:15.