



WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT CLASSIFICATION

The treatment of domestic waste (sewage) is vital to maintain the quality of California's ground water and water ways. Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP) are crucial to ensuring that raw sewage is treated appropriately before the resulting treated effluent is discharged to land or water.

Section 13626 of the California Water Code gives the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) responsibility for classifying all publicly owned wastewater treatment plants and privately owned plants regulated by the Public Utility Commission or Waste Discharge Requirements. Agencies may not classify their own plants nor can the Regional Boards assign the designations.

The Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP) under the State Water Board, determines the classification of a WWTP by reviewing a completed Wastewater Treatment Facility Classification form, in conjunction with any applicable permits for discharge, an organization chart, flow diagram of the plant, job descriptions for all personnel classifications and duty rosters. Once the WWOCP reviews the information, the WWTP owner will be sent a letter indicating the classification and appropriate operator grades. However, the WWOCP does not specify how many operators must be employed at each grade level. If there are any changes in the WWTP that may affect its classification (such as upgrades to accommodate more influent or changes in types of treatment processes used), the owner must submit a new classification form and accompanying documents as

listed above within 30 days of the change. Criteria for classification are specified in the following WWTP Classification Table.

WWTP CLASSIFICATION TABLE*

Class	Wastewater Treatment Process	Design Flow (million gal/day)
I	Primary	1.0 or less
	Conventional Treatment Pond	All
II	Primary	>1.0 - 5.0
	Biofiltration	1.0 or less
	Modified Treatment Pond	All
III	Primary	>5.0 - 20.0
	Biofiltration	>1.0 - 10.0
	Activated Sludge	5.0 or less
	Sequencing Batch Reactor . . .	1.0 or less
	Tertiary	1.0 or less
IV	Primary	>20.0
	Biofiltration	>10.0 - 30.0
	Activated Sludge	>5.0 - 20.0
	Sequencing Batch Reactor . . .	>1.0 - 10.0
	Tertiary	>1.0 - 10.0
V	Biofiltration	>30.0
	Activated Sludge	>20.0
	Sequencing Batch Reactor . . .	>10.0
	Tertiary	>10.0

*Section 3675 of Operator Certification Regulations: California Code of Regulations, title 23, division 3, chapter 26, section 3670 et seq.



WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

The Chief Plant Operator (CPO) is the operator responsible for the overall operation of the WWTP and must be a certified WWTP operator at the same grade of, or higher than the level of classification of the WWTP.

The Designated Operator-in-Charge (DOIC) is a certified operator appointed by the CPO to be responsible for the overall operation of a WWTP, including compliance with the applicable waste discharge requirements when the CPO is unable to carry out the responsibilities of the position. The DOIC reports directly to the CPO.

Both the CPO's and DOIC's minimum required certification levels depend on the WWTP classification. Please see the chart listed below.**

WWTP Classification	Minimum Grade Level of CPO	Minimum Grade Level of DOIC
I	I	I
II	II	I
III	III	II
IV	IV	III
V	V	III

** Section 3680(a) of Operator Certification Regulations: California Code of Regulations, title 23, division 3, chapter 26, section 3670 et seq.

UNCLASSIFIED WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES

Several types of wastewater treatment facilities are not classified by the WWOCP and therefore, operators working at those facilities are not required to be certified. Those facilities include privately owned Industrial WWTPs, such as winery or food processing facilities; Agricultural WWTPs, such as a dairy farm; and many Tribal-owned WWTPs. Additionally, Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS) that are covered by the State Water Board OWTS Policy do not require certified operators. Operators at these facilities are not required to be certified. Any experience earned while working in

operations is **not** recognized by the WWOCP as qualifying experience for certification.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

In order to ensure proper operation of WWTPs and compliance with current Operator Certification regulations and any applicable discharge permits, the State Water Board may impose administrative civil liability for violations. Fines of \$100 per day may be imposed upon 1) any person who operates a WWTP without holding a valid, unexpired certificate at the appropriate grade level or 2) any person who owns or operates a WWTP that employs, or allows the employment of, a person as an operator who does not hold a valid, unexpired certificate of the appropriate grade level. Furthermore, fines of \$5000 per violation may be imposed upon any person for 1) employing fraud or deception in the course of operating a WWTP, 2) failing to use reasonable care or judgement in the operation of a WWTP, 3) willfully or negligently violating, or causing, or allowing the violation of the waste discharge requirements. In addition to fines, the SWRCB may refuse to grant, suspend, or revoke a certificate.

If a WWTP issues a disciplinary action, are they obligated to report it to the WWOCP? The facility owner (or CPO representing the facility owner) is required to provide written notification to the WWOCP within thirty (30) days of any final disciplinary action. Disciplinary action includes reprimanding or placing on probation, suspending, demoting, or discharging an operator, provisional operator, OIT, or contract operator for performing, or allowing or causing another to perform, any act of violation. Only final disciplinary actions that violate the WWTP Operator Certification Regulations and/or the Water Code are reportable to the WWOCP. Owners are not required to report non-operational disciplinary actions due to a DUI or other action that does not have any bearing on the operation of the WWTP. The notice must include the name of the operator, provisional operator, OIT, or contract operator, the specific violations, and the final disciplinary action taken. The notice also must include the operator's certificate number or the contract operator's registration number.

Any person (e.g., a CPO, operator, OIT, or member of the public) who has reason to suspect a violation of the WWTP Operator Certification Regulations and/or the Water Code is encouraged to contact the WWOCP or the Office of Enforcement directly at reportfraud@waterboards.ca.gov or (916)341-5272. Reports can be made anonymously.

EXEMPTION OF A CLASS I WWTP

Some Class I WWTPs may qualify for an exemption, meaning a certified operator would not be required to operate the plant. The WWTP shall be granted an exemption only if the WWOCP determines that the WWTP could not, due to operator error, violate water quality objectives. For more information on applying for an Exemption, please visit the following website http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/operator_certification/exempt_wwtp.shtml

For more information, please see section 3675 of the WWTP Operator Certification Regulations. If you have any questions regarding WWTP Classification, please call (916) 341-5819 or email at wwopcertprogram@waterboards.ca.gov.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND PROGRAM UPDATES VISIT THE WASTEWATER OPERATOR CERTIFICATION WEBSITE AT:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/operator_certification/operator_certification.shtml

CONTACT INFORMATION

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