

# Drinking Water Program Operator Certification – Frequently Asked Questions (As of October 1, 2014)

## **1. When will the Drinking Water Program move to the Water Control Board?**

Effective July 1, 2014, the responsibility for California’s operator certification program for operators of public water systems was transferred from the State Department of Public Health (CDPH) to the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board). The transfer was accomplished by means of the addition of new Section 116271 to the Health and Safety Code. However, no change was made to the existing drinking water operator certification program statutes or regulations. The Office of Operator Certification is comprised of two programs:

**Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (DWOCP)** - The goal of the program is to ensure that skilled professionals are overseeing the treatment and distribution of safe drinking water. Operator certification is an important step in promoting compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA).

**Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certification Program (WWOCP)** – The goal is to ensure that operators of wastewater treatment facilities in the State meet the minimum level of competence; thereby, protecting public health and the environment.

## **2. What will change?**

As of October 1, 2014, DWOCP will physically relocate to the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) building (1001 I St.). This is where the State Water Board is located. Email addresses of Op Cert staff have changed. Certificates and ID cards issued July 1, 2014 have changed. To stay updated on the transfer please refer to [www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/operator\\_certification](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/operator_certification)

## **3. Will I work with the same staff?**

Yes. You will work with the same program staff.

## **4. Will I need to call a different phone number?**

The contact phone numbers will remain the same.

## **5. Where should I mail the application/renewal fee?**

As of October 1, 2014, the mailing address has changed to:

**State Water Resources Control Board  
P.O. Box 944212  
Sacramento CA 94244  
Attn: Drinking Water Operator Certification Program**

**6. Will the fees increase?**

Fees are based on the program covering its costs. At this time, we do not anticipate any fee increase as a result of the transfer.

**7. How are the fees set?**

Fees are set in regulation. If any changes were to be made to the fee structure, they would go through the public participation and rulemaking process.

**8. Who will I make my check payable to?**

As of July 1, 2014, please make checks payable to the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board or SWRCB).

**9. Will the regulations change?**

The regulations for the Office of Operation Certification are currently under review. At this time, there will be no immediate changes. If the regulations are changed, it will not be a result of the transition.

**10. Will my current CDPH issued certifications remain valid?**

Yes. The certificates issued by CDPH are valid until their expiration date.

**11. Will I be sent new certification issued by SWRCB?**

Not at this time. Your existing certificate will remain valid until the expiration date. Upon expiration of your certificate, a renewal ID card will be issued from the State Water Board.

**12. Will the frequency of my renewal change?**

No. For the time being the frequency of the drinking water renewal will remain the same. Any amendments to the current renewal procedures must go through the regulatory process for approval.

**13. Will the examination dates (for drinking water) remain the same as listed on the State website?**

The examination dates for the time period of July 2014 through June 2015 will remain the same. The program has not identified exam dates post June 2015.

**14. Will I be able to take a drinking water exam at a wastewater session?**

At this time, the wastewater and drinking water exams will remain separate. However, the program is considering offering the exams together in the future.

**15. For drinking water examinations, will all Grade Levels continue to have the same amount of time to complete the exam?**

All Grade Levels will continue to have the same amount of time to complete the exam. Treatment Grade 5 will remain an oral exam for the foreseeable future.

**16. Will there be a recycled water certification?**

The Office of Operator Certification is assessing whether to offer a recycled water certification in the future. This would require statutory amendments as well as changes to the regulations.

**17. Will there be a dual certification fee reduction for being a Wastewater and Drinking Water operator?**

The Office of Operator Certification is assessing the possibility of a dual certification. This would require both statutory and regulatory amendments.

**18. Will the wastewater certificate require continuing education contact hours for renewal?**

The Office of Operator Certification is assessing whether continuing education contact hours should become a requirement for wastewater certification. Any amendments to the current certification procedures must go through the regulatory process for approval.

**19. Will the exam content change?**

The State Water Board has an ongoing validation process to ensure that exam questions are representative of operator duties and responsibilities. Questions may change because of this process. Changes to the exam questions are not a result of the transfer.

**20. Will there be essay questions on the Water Treatment and Distribution exams in the future?**

There is no proposal to change the existing exam format.

**21. Will the website change?**

Yes, the Drinking Water website has changed. The current address is:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking\\_water/certlic/occupations/DWopcert.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/occupations/DWopcert.shtml)

The State Water Board is working on making the website more user-friendly.

**22. Will enforcement action for drinking water operators change?**

At this time, State Water Board – Drinking Water District Office and the Local Primacy Agencies will continue to enforce operator certification requirements for public water systems. Certified operators continue to have the same responsibilities and must maintain the appropriate level of certification.

**23. How can I keep up to date on information with the transition and future program updates?**

For current information on the transition please refer to

[www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinkingwater](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinkingwater).

The State Water Boards uses electronic subscription mailing lists that are available on its website. A subscription for drinking water operators is being created. Operators will be able to subscribe to the list, as changes are announced they will be automatically notified.

**24. Will the wastewater exams and certificate process change?**

At this time there are no changes to the wastewater exam and certification process. You may keep updated on changes by accessing the website at

[www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/operator\\_certification](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/operator_certification).