



Drinking Water Operator Certification Program

RENEWAL AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How to Renew Your Certificate

Once you have obtained certification, you must renew it every three years. To renew your certification, you must submit a renewal form, pay the renewal fee and provide proof that you completed the required number of continuing education hours during your renewal period.

Your certificate renewal form and fees are due 120 days prior to the certificate expiration date. A courtesy renewal reminder is mailed to your address of record approximately two months prior to your due date. **It is your responsibility** to submit a renewal form, pay the applicable renewal fee and provide information regarding your continuing education on time even if you do not receive the renewal reminder.

You cannot legally operate with an expired certificate. Any person operating a water distribution system, water treatment plant, or water recycling treatment plant without an appropriate, valid, unexpired certification is guilty of a misdemeanor and may be liable civilly.

Continuing Education

What is continuing education?

Continuing education is courses, classes or seminars that present information related to the operation of a drinking water treatment facility and/or distribution system. Contact hours can be earned by attending water industry meetings, conferences, workshops, in-house trainings, college courses, correspondence courses and online classes.

The course, class, seminar or presentation must be a minimum of 50 minutes long to count for one contact hour. Multiple short classes over different days cannot be added together to equal one contact hour.

How far back in time can I go for contact hours?

All certified operators must complete their continuing education contact hours during their renewal period. Your renewal period starts 3 years prior to the due date listed on your ID card/renewal form and ends at your due date. Hours completed after the due date and used on the current renewal cannot be used again on the next renewal.

What happens if I don't complete the hours by my due date?

Contact hours should be submitted with your renewal application and fees by your *due date*. If you cannot complete your hours by that date, your hours should be submitted at least 45 days prior to the certificates expiration date to avoid your certificate from expiring. If your certificate expires before the application for renewal is approved, you **must not** perform the related certified operator duties until the application for renewal is approved and your certificate reinstated.

There is a grace period of up to six months after your certificates expiration date to complete the contact hours. However, your certification will be **EXPIRED** during this grace period, and you cannot work as a drinking water operator until your certification is reinstated.

If your renewal form, fees and contact hours are not submitted within one year of your certificates expiration date, your certification cannot be reinstated, and you will have to take and pass an exam in order to be eligible to be a certified operator again.

How many continuing education contact hours do I need to renew my certification?

The number of required contact hours is based upon the grade of certificate held. Continuing education contact hours for treatment and distribution certificate renewals are as follows:

Number of Required Contact Hours

Grade 1 = 12 Hours

Grade 2 = 16 Hours

Grade 3 = 24 Hours

Grade 4 = 36 Hours

Grade 5 = 36 Hours

Operators possessing both water distribution and water treatment certificates may apply the same continuing education hours to both certificates provided that the hours were earned within the renewal period for each certificate. Copies of contact hours should be submitted with each renewal application to avoid processing delays.

Can I use safety training towards the continuing education requirement?

Yes, operators may submit up to 25% of the required contact hours with safety training. Examples of acceptable safety topics are as follows: confined spaces, slip and fall prevention, electrical safety, etc. In-house safety meetings are acceptable if the meeting meets the minimum of 50 minutes.

Maximum Number of Safety Hours That May be Submitted

Grade 1 = 3 hours
Grade 2 = 4 hours
Grade 3 = 6 hours
Grade 4 = 9 hours
Grade 5 = 9 hours

How do I prove that I've completed the required number of continuing education contact hours?

Please submit **copies** of the certificates of completion or school transcripts. School transcripts can be official or unofficial. If you send unofficial transcripts, please ensure they include the name of your school and your name on the transcripts.

You may also submit copies of sign-in sheets or your employee training history from your company. For sign-in sheets, please ensure they include the name of the company as well as:

- The date of the class
- Name of class
- Duration of class (the minimum for any class is 50 minutes)
- Your printed name and signature
- Name and phone number of safety/training coordinator

For a printed training history, please ensure it is on company letterhead and includes:

- Your name
- The date of each class
- Name of each class
- Duration of each class (the minimum for any class is 50 minutes)
- Name and phone number of safety/training coordinator
- The signature of the safety/training coordinator

What is a CEU and how does it translate to contact hours?

A CEU stands for Continuing Education Unit. Some continuing education providers use CEUs instead of contact hours on their certificates. One CEU equals 10 contact hours. For example, if a certificate lists a class as 1.6 CEUs, that equals 16 contact hours. A class that is 0.3 CEUs is 3 contact hours.

How many contact hours is a 3-unit college semester course worth?

A 3-unit college semester course is worth 45 contact hours. For continuing education, you may send an official or unofficial copy of your transcripts. If you send an unofficial copy, please ensure the transcript includes your name, the name of the college, the name of the class, the semester or date when the class was completed, the number of semester units and your final grade.

Where can I get continuing education?

You can access a list of providers located at our website by clicking here:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/occupations/documents/opcert/e_providers.pdf

There are online, correspondence and classroom courses available. Please remember that these providers may provide classes that are not drinking water-related and are not acceptable for contact hours.

Please review the lists of acceptable technical and safety topics for more information:

[Acceptable Continuing Education Topics](#)

[Acceptable CE Safety Topics](#)

[Unacceptable Continuing Education Topics](#)

If you are unsure if a class is acceptable, please contact the Office of Operator Certification at (916) 449-5611 or dwopcertprogram@waterboards.ca.gov.

I instruct drinking water classes at a local college. Can I receive continuing education hours from these classes?

Yes, you can receive up to 50% of your contact hours as an instructor of a drinking water class. As an example, if you are a D3 or T3 operator that requires 24 hours of contact hours, you can receive credit for up to 12 hours toward your continuing education requirements. To receive this credit, you may submit a letter from the school that includes the following:

- On school letterhead
- The name of the instructor (your name)
- Place where the instruction took place (name of school, city and state)

- The title of the class and subject being taught
- Dates or time of instruction. Example- 8 weeks of instruction, every Monday from Jan 10, 2016 – Mar 10, 2016, from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm
- If the class is a college course, please state the number of units
- The name, phone number and signature of the HR contact person verifying this information