

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
WATER UTILITY OPERATOR LICENSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
May 15, 2009
9:30 a.m.

TCEQ
12100 Park 35 Circle, Bldg. F, 3rd Flr, Rm. 3202
Austin, Texas

MINUTES

Members Attending

Russell L. Hamilton (Chair)
Carol V. Batterton
Matthew Boober (Vice- Chair)
James W. Fischer
Ginger Laird
William F. Quinn
Mark W. Routon
Carola G. Serrato
Ghulam Sumdani
Michael Vollmar
Larry West
Robert Rowell

Members Absent

Joseph G. Majdalani (P.E)

TCEQ Staff Attending

Susan Hier, CSD
Brian Lehmkuhle, CSD
Barbara Mendieta, CSD
Sandra Mota, CSD
Sarita Nazareth, CSD
Terry Thompson, CSD
Allan Vargas, CSD

Others

Betty Boober
Greg Eckhardt

Russell Hamilton, Chair called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. A quorum was confirmed. The members, guests and TCEQ staff were introduced. The Minutes of the February 27, 2009 meeting were approved.

Texas Small Public Water System Training Program

Sandi Mota provided the following metrics from the last quarterly WUOLAC meeting and as of April 2009 for the Texas Small Public Water Training System Program:

- Water System enrollment has increased from 3346 to 3418.
- The numbers for Classroom Training events have gone up from 554-654.
- The number of Cluster Training Courses that have been delivered has risen from 715 to 779.

Additionally, Ms. Mota indicated that a Cluster Course I workshop to train the trainers was held last month in an effort to add more instructors throughout the State of Texas. She also mentioned that the Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester courses are currently offered through the Texas Engineering Extension Service and that two additional commercial contractors are expected to be in effect by early June 2009 to provide classroom training.

Licensing Update

Terry Thompson gave us an update on the Water Licensing Program. From the start of the fiscal year, the program has received 3500 applications and has administered 2300 exams. The number of new licenses through April was 1079 and the number of renewals was 1748.

Computer-Based Testing (CBT)

Ms. Hier provided a brief update of the CBT program:

- 10 test centers are now under contract
- Fees for CBT administration currently range from \$15 - \$50
- Water Treatment Specialist Class I, II, and III exams are available

- CSI exams are available
- No one has taken a CBT yet

She distributed copies of the updated CBT web site for their information.

Training Update

Brian Lehmkuhle discussed a number of training issues. Regarding exams, the training program staff has started working to revise D-level exams for both water (W) and wastewater (WW). Revisions to both exams should be completed before the end of June-09, and then be available for computer-based testing.

The staff has also been finalizing a contract for and preparing to implement a Surface Water job task analysis (JTA), and are soliciting names of licensees who are experienced subject matter experts (SME) regarding surface water treatment. The individuals chosen to help as SME's would have many years of actual hands-on surface water treatment operational experience; we are looking for licensees with significantly more than three years conducting such direct operational activities. As to duties, SME's would help create survey questions and help review survey results and contractor-developed exam questions.

Brian mentioned two upcoming TCEQ-related events being conducted during this summer. The first was the Training Provider Seminar on July 1-3, 2009, and the second was the Public Drinking Water Conference to be held August 11-12, 2009; both will be held in the Austin area. Members can contact us if they would like more details on either event. Both of these are excellent places to get program/related updates on what has happened or changed over the last year. The August event does not have a registration fee.

Brian noted that as a general rule, courses listed in our records as "equivalent" to a core course remained equivalent until the provider was notified otherwise by our program. A decision to change a course's equivalent status would probably be preceded by a request from our staff for additional information. This issue came up recently regarding the

revision/reapproval of a core course and the possible affect on other courses that had been listed as equivalent to the respective core course.

There were some responses from WUOLAC members requesting the JTA consider how to have surface water course(s) better address membranes used in water treatment. Also Brian accumulated the names of SMES's that we might consider using to help with the JTA.

Basic Water and Wastewater D License

Mr. Hamilton brought up a concern that operators holding Class D, W/WW licenses did not have any incentive for advancement. These operators continually renew their D licenses and also go back to the same Basic Water and Basic Wastewater courses for renewal.

To change this trend, there was a suggestion that the Basic W/WW courses not be used for renewal. Other suggestions included that there be a cap on the number of times a particular course could be taken. That would force the operators to take other courses and expand their knowledge. Another suggestion was to develop more relevant courses, including the current rules and technology.

Also discussed was a problem from the Small Business Perspective, if D operators were forced to take the C license. Some water systems are only willing to pay for a D license salary for their operators.

There was also a discussion on the pass/fail rates of the A, B and C, W and WW licensing exams. Mr. Fischer suggested a reference guide tied to exam analysis to help the operators prepare more thoroughly, matching topics with resources Mr. Rowell also suggested the ABC study guide from the Water Environment Federation could be helpful. The topic of whether training should expire was also discussed.

Finally, the Committee decided to write up a formal recommendation on the issue of the renewal of the D Water and Waste Water License which would be presented to the Licensing Section for consideration.

Most if not all of the WUOLAC members and TCEQ staff in attendance made comments during this meeting on one or more issues. Some other issues briefly discussed included

- i. Whether this WUOLAC gathering was an open meeting?(Yes)
- ii. Changes coming from this legislative session (session was still underway).
- iii. Pros/cons of changing the scheme of the A-level license to have specialized Water license tracks, with separate Distribution, Surface Water and Ground Water A –level licenses; and
- iv. The requirements to have the basic course for C-Distribution and both W/WW licenses at D-level while no such requirement for the initial WW Collections license.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting was scheduled for August 21, 2009.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.30 a.m.