

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
WATER UTILITY OPERATOR LICENSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
October 22, 2014
9:30 a.m.

TCEQ
12100 Park 35 Circle, Bldg. C, Room 131
Austin, Texas

MINUTES

Members Attending:

Timothy Crosswhite
Roy Staggs
Kenneth Hutchins
Russell Hamilton
Mark Rich
Gary Sober
Ray Gooden
Larry Bell
Ginger Laird
Robb Starr
Paul Bonaventure

Members Absent:

Michael Urrutia
Leonard Leinfelder

TCEQ Staff:

David James
Russ Garner
Michael Parish
Izzy Parra
Linda Saladino
Anthony Maldonado
Paul Munguia

Guests Attending:

James Fisher
Allen Schreiber

The meeting was called to order by Paul Munguia, TCEQ. A quorum was confirmed. All attendees were introduced. The minutes from May 21, 2014 were approved.

Nominations for a new president were opened. Russell Hamilton nominated Robb Starr to be president, Gary Sober seconded. There were no objections. Robb Starr was elected the new president of WUOLAC, and Ginger Laird will continue to be vice president.

Drinking Water Advisory Working Group (DWA WG), Education Sub-Committee Report

Russell Hamilton represented the Sub-Committee and did not have a report to present. Russell mentioned that Leonard Leinfelder had expressed some concerns about being able to set up a meeting time with James Beauchamp, to which Russ Gardner replied that he would help coordinate a meeting. Linda Saladino reminded the group that there are upcoming rule packages that the group should be aware of and track if they are interested.

Occupational Licensing's promotion of CBT exams and seeking new exam sites

Izzy Parra reported that TCEQ is currently seeking additional sites to administer Computer Based Tests (CBT). One of the first targeted areas of Texas is the San Antonio region. The group expressed a concern that the added cost of taking an exam via CBT could be a deterrent. Russell H. suggested rolling the additional CBT cost into the total cost of taking an exam. Additionally, the group suggested that the TCEQ post the cost of taking a CBT exam for each location. Roy S. suggested that an AA operator could help proctor exams to alleviate TCEQ staff. Izzy discussed all the benefits of taking a CBT over the traditional method and how those benefits may outweigh the cost to the individuals. Russ G. explained the trend of CBT has shown an annual increase in participants. Izzy asked the group that if they knew of any non-profit facilities that would be interested in administering CBT exams, to contact him directly.

Discuss renaming of operators (topic requested by former WUOLAC member)

Allen S. (former WUOLAC member) led a discussion on renaming the operators to give a greater professionalism to the job. The group generally agreed that the majority of the public does not realize the importance of this industry and that the profession would benefit from having a more positive spotlight. The group discussed the pros and cons of changing the name of the operators and the means of doing so. Linda S. referenced the ABC website, which calls their operators "professional operators" – Linda will send the link to the group for their review and suggestions.

Review of Water Licensing Work Experience Insert

The group provided their opinion regarding what experience should count towards obtaining a license and suggested some of the job duties should not be grouped together. Izzy will consult with technical experts at TCEQ to see if the recommended revisions may be possible and will report back to the group.

Ebola Update

David James of TCEQ gave an update regarding the safety of water and wastewater operators and the Ebola virus. David informed the group that Governor Perry has established an Ebola Taskforce, of which our Executive Director, Richard Hyde, P.E., is a member. David reminded the group that all operators should abide by their training on infectious waste and blood born pathogen treatment. The group had questions regarding how long the virus is stable in various environments (e.g. sludge, landfill, Dillo Dirt) and David recommended referencing the Centers for Disease Control's website for specific information. He has not found a specific study for Ebola in wastewater. David expects the CDC to release more information within a week's time and he will share with the group. Additionally, TCEQ has an email list of approved training providers for water and information will be shared with them.

Invitation for input to RG-373

Linda will create an edited version of the RG-373 for future WUOLAC review. The guidance will not only try to clarify items of concern to the WUOLAC, but also incorporate the draft guidance being used to approve webinars in accordance with recent rule changes to 30 TAC Chapter 30 Subchapter A. The items considered for webinar approval have already been reviewed and discussed with the WUOLAC.

Training Updates:

Status of Updating RG-002: Process Control Tests for Domestic Wastewater Treatment Facilities

A draft copy with comments from WUOLAC and TCEQ was sent electronically to the committee. The most significant addition was a table of recommended testing and guidance parameters related to facilities performing biological nutrient removal (BNR). Members wanted clarification on how the regulatory guidance will be used and were assured the purpose is as stated in the document: performing the recommended process control tests will help ensure that your facility does not experience effluent quality violations. The tests and frequency are only recommended to enable compliance and better define process control. A final copy reflecting comments from WUOLAC and TCEQ will be resent to the committee before being sent for final publication.

Status of core training manual availability and requested manual edits tied to exams

The TCEQ identified topics related to licensing exams that were either not covered in enough detail or not covered at all in core training course manuals. A list of these topics was created for each core course approved manual. The providers/publishers of the manuals were sent topical lists for them to make the appropriate additions to the manuals. The status of the providers making these changes and communicating with TCEQ was shared with the WUOLAC. Also, manuals such as TEEEX's Pump & Motor Maintenance manuals have been updated and are currently available for sale to approved providers. Providers approved for using any prior version of these manuals or changing to a different manual must send an application for re-approval to the TCEQ along with an amended lesson plan/agenda reflecting the new manual content and how they will handle the hands-on training portion of the course. Providers should be sending any significant changes or updates to core training manuals to the TCEQ.

BPAT exam implementation

The current BPAT exam consists of two parts which are both currently administered by the approved training providers: a performance/practical skills test and a written test. A copy of training provider questions, along with the TCEQ proposed answers was shared with WUOLAC regarding the implementation of TCEQ licensing and administering the BPAT written exam with the expectation that providers will administer the practical skills test in accordance with TCEQ standards. A final version of the written exam content should be ready by the end of the year with a target implementation of the first quarter of 2015.

Other Business

Adjourn