

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Water Utility Operator Licensing Advisory Committee
March 24, 2006
10:00a.m.

TCEQ
12100 Park 35 Circle, Bldg. A, 2nd Floor, Rm. 202
Austin, Texas

M I N U T E S

Members Attending

Larry Bell
Richard E. Harbuck
Charles R. Maddox, P.E.
Debbie Magin
Ted Neumann
George Patterson
David L. Yohe
Carol V. Batterton
Dennis King Sr.
Odis Tyler
Carola G. Serrato
David Sanders

Members Absent

Robert Riley

TCEQ Compliance Support Division Staff Attending

Susan Hier
Alex Hinz
Linda Saladino
Terry Thompson

Others Attending

Michael Vollmar, Texas Rural Water Association, Austin TX
Tim Williford, ECO Resources
Russell Hamilton, Texas Water Utilities Association, Austin, TX
Elston Johnson, TCEQ Field Operations Division
Joy Schultz, TCEQ Small Business and Environmental Assistance Division

Charlie Maddox, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and confirmed that a quorum was present. The five new members of the committee were welcomed and all members received a packet of information covering responsibilities and a reminder concerning the attendance policy. The members introduced themselves and explained their connection to the water utility industry and the type of work they perform. Other guests and TCEQ staff also introduced themselves. The Minutes of the December 9, 2005 meeting were not available for review.

Election of Committee Vice ChairCharlie Maddox
Richard Harbuck nominated Debbie Magin. Nomination was seconded and passed by the committee.

Update on Chapter 30 rules, RG-373

Exams in Region 4

Discussion on Process ControlTerry Thompson

Terry Thompson provided an overview of the licensing programs administered by the Operator Licensing Section of TCEQ for approximately 47,000 licensees:

- For Fiscal Year 2005- 9311 new applications processed
- 14,141 renewal applications processed
- 11,239 exams administered
- 7189 new licenses issued
- 13993 renewed licenses issued

Staff also is involved with several major projects in addition to these duties, so very busy at this time.

Update on Chapter 30 rules, RG-373

The target for the concept paper for deputy approval to open the rules is summer, at least 30 days after adoption of the Subsurface Area Drip Dispersal Systems rules in June. Additional rule clean-up and the incorporation of key components of the regulatory guidance document, RG-373: *Approval of Training for Occupational Licensing* into Chapter 30 will also be involved. Charlie Maddox asked that the committee be used as a resource and for feedback as early as possible in the process for the revisions in Chapter 30.

Exams in Region 4

The North Central Texas Council of Governments was administering licensing exams in the DFW area and charging an additional \$20 fee per licensee. As of February, TCEQ Region 4 is administering the exams at the same location without an additional fee. Licensees must pre-register for the exam session (morning and afternoon sessions held once per month) due to a capacity issue. Licensees may now go on-line to register for the exam at a link from the TCEQ website. Linda Saladino noted a conflict of interest with the COG advertising pre-exam study courses and also administering the exam. Since they no longer have access to examinations, this issue is moot.

Process Control Summary

A discussion of “process control” as it relates to licensed operator duties and responsibilities occurred as a result of City of Austin using unlicensed lab techs to pull compliance samples in the distribution system such as chlorine residuals and Bac-T.

Definition in Chapter 30 referenced. *Under the supervision of ...* is another issue not part of this discussion. D. Yohe placed samples into four groups 1) raw 2) special 3) construction and 4) compliance-closely tied to process control. When compliance investigations involve calibration records and technique, a lab tech may be better than operator; however, lab tech or construction personnel may not have knowledge of the whole process. L. Bell felt you may be asking a licensed operator to sign-off where he/she is not pulling samples. Since these tasks are part of protecting public health, T. Neuman felt a licensed operator should be utilized. This issue most likely will not effect small systems as the operator is already doing multiple tasks versus the larger systems with more specialization. Alex Hinz reminded the committee that a Class C Water license is required in most cases, but a Class D Water license can be renewed if used only

for construction or sampling. Debbie Magin would not have her staff from the lab pull samples, only analyze the samples. GBRA laboratory personnel are not trained to collect these samples are part of their job. **The general consensus of the committee- licensed operator should collect routine compliance and construction microbiological and disinfection residual samples.** Terry Thompson, TCEQ Team Leader, will be meeting with TCEQ staff from Field Operations and the Public Drinking Water Section to obtain some consistency about applying “process control.”

Other general comments- Systems have been told that changing out meters requires a license since the system is opened. Licensing staff and rules focus on requirements to get a license and approve training to obtain and maintain a license. Program issue concerning what is done with the license in systems.

On-line Application for License RenewalsSusan Hier

Licensing staff is performing final testing for using Texas-Online for applying for license or registration renewals. Target date to be ready is April 1, 2006. Payment methods will include credit cards, electronic check, and third party payment for multiple employees (not available until 6/1/06). The continuing education training must be completed and received by the TCEQ database before expiration date to be eligible. Information will be pulled daily from the TCEQ database 90 days before the expiration date and 30 days after.

Licensee will be able to change address on-line. Multiple web pages will be provided to supply instructions and answers to frequently asked questions. The initial subscription was paid by the agency so there is no additional cost to the licensee.

Also, providing further upgrades in customer service, more information is available on the TCEQ website such as exam results, training records, and license numbers.

Subsurface Area Drip Dispersal System Wastewater Rules.....Susan Hier
(Proposed TCEQ Chapter 222 rules in response to HB 2651)

By 11/1/2008, a Class C Wastewater Operator license will be required to operate domestic systems that are permitted over 5000 gallons per day. The complexity of the subsurface area drip dispersal system requires good quality effluent coming from the plant; therefore, it is appropriate to require an operator with more training and experience than is required for other land application disposal systems. The permittee shall ensure all operators are trained to operate the treatment and dispersal system.

The Class D Wastewater license will no longer be renewable in this circumstance. The necessary rule changes will be included in Chapter 30 after adoption of these rules (Chapter 222) estimated to occur in June 2006. Handout attached to original of minutes.

Surface Water Course requirements.....Alex Hinz

Surface Water Operator Requirements- Both courses, Surface Water Production I & II will be required for applications for the Class C and B Surface Water licenses received after March 1, 2006. It will require 164 hours to apply for the Class A Water license. Policy handout attached to original of minutes.

Training Rosters.....Alex Hinz

Currently, two versions of a roster are sent electronically to the TCEQ as email attachments. The proposed procedure will use STEERS, a web application currently used by the TCEQ air program to submit data. The training provider will need to sign an agreement to submit true and accurate data, complete required fields, and provide rosters in comma delimited format. The program, to be called TROLS (Training Roster On-Line Submittal), will perform data quality checks and provide feedback to the training provider if data fails. When the roster is accepted, a training session will be created and the roster will automatically load to the TCEQ database. TCEQ is encouraging all training providers to use license numbers versus social security numbers, where possible. The date of completion is not known at this time but when implemented, there will be a hard line changeover. The ability to submit versions 1 & 2 will no longer be available. Training sessions and detailed instructions on the web will be available. The Appendix of RG-373 will require changes to reflect the TROLS version of submitting rosters electronically.

Follow-up on Membrane Technology.....Charlie Maddox

Charlie Maddox was contacted by members of the South Central Desalting Association after a presentation at an earlier advisory committee meeting. Two issues have been presented to TCEQ Operator Licensing Section-

- 1) SCDA desires a separate licensing program for operators of membrane plants (primarily drinking water production) and
- 2) Wastewater Operator training credit is requested for the *Basics of Membrane Technology Seminar* provided by this association.

A separate license may limit operator opportunities. If the training is available, operators of these systems should attend. The SCDA should contact the Drinking Water Section to determine the location of such plants and operators to plan training and advertise to these operators. There are such varied uses of this technology across groundwater and surface water applications; it would be difficult to completely separate this information from the present groundwater and surface water licensing. It was recommended that existing training courses keep updated with these technology changes. A separate course as an elective may need to be created as this technology becomes more prevalent. The high cost of the membranes will probably push this training to be available sooner than later. An endorsement to a water operator license was mentioned as a possibility to consider.

L. Saladino read the topics covered in the SCDA's *Basics of Membrane Technology Seminar* to the committee. The general information did not seem to address the differences encountered by wastewater operators. The committee felt assigning water operator training credit was more in line with the information. Committee recommended that unless additional detail is provided to support training for wastewater operators on membrane technology, water operator credit only will be assigned.

Texas Small Public Water System Training Program Update

Training Provider Seminar.....Linda Saladino

As of 3/21/06, Engitech, EPA ERG contractor administrator, has enrolled 4,538 operators and 2,519 systems in the TSPWSTP. There are a total of 4,627 systems in Texas, according to TCEQ data as of June 2005. It is estimated that there are 1.8 operator(s) per system.

Annual TCEQ Training Provider Seminar will be July 5-7, 2006 in Austin. Committee members liked the location last year at the Marriot in La Fonterra in Round Rock versus previous location in Austin.

Exam Revisions/ Updates.....Linda Saladino

Ted Neumann was selected as the chairman of a subcommittee to be composed of both advisory committee members and subject matter experts with A level operator licenses is tasked with working with TCEQ staff to accomplish exam revisions. Currently, exam questions for surface water production and safety have been created from current approved training manuals and will need to be validated for accuracy, clarity and level of difficulty. A test item analysis of the D Wastewater Operator exam should be reviewed and options available for the replacement of the essay questions on the A Water and Wastewater Operator exams discussed. Committee members suggested questions come from information in Texas training materials and to be sure that the subcommittee has representation from both large and small systems.

The following A-licensed committee members volunteered to serve on the subcommittee: David Yohe, David Sanders, Larry Bell, Dennis King, Odis Tyler, Richard Harbuck volunteered James Fischer. Ted Neumann, chair, and TCEQ staff will select one or two volunteers to assist with exam revisions while inviting special subject matter experts to review specific topics covered in exams. General issues concerning exams will still be presented to the entire advisory committee.

Training Approval Question.....Linda Saladino

Members discussed whether to continue to award the instructor training courses 40 hours of training credit for various licensing programs. Training credit was initially assigned in 2002 to encourage operators to become qualified instructors. Members felt this was not in line with present assignment of training credit, i.e., training for a core task directly related to the job and not an incentive. Members recommended that operator/installer training credit be removed from instructor training classes since instructors of classroom training may add their names to rosters of classes they teach to obtain continuing training credit.

Other Agenda Items for discussion

Next Meeting.....Charlie Maddox

It was suggested that the next meeting be held in conjunction with the TCEQ Training Provider Seminar on July 5, 2006 in Austin. The committee agreed. Location will be announced after obtaining a meeting room either at the site of the seminar or at the TCEQ Austin campus.

Charlie Maddox, Chair, adjourned the meeting at 12:45.