

***Texas Commission on Environmental Quality***  
**WATER UTILITY OPERATOR LICENSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**November 1, 2012**  
**10:00 a.m.**

**TCEQ**  
**12100 Park 35 Circle, Bldg. A, Room 310**  
**Austin, Texas**

**MINUTES**

**Members Attending:**

Bobby Russell  
Allen Schreiber  
Larry West  
Ginger Laird  
Russell Hamilton  
Ray Gooden  
Mark Rich

**Members Absent:**

Leonard Leinfelder  
Adrian Montemayor  
Gary Sober  
Roy Staggs  
Robb Starr  
Michael Urrutia

**TCEQ Staff:**

Russell Gardner, PRS  
Linda Saladino, PRS  
Paul Munguia, PRS  
JuneElla Martinez, PWS  
Elston Johnson, PWS  
James Beachamp, PWS

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM. Members and TCEQ staff introduced themselves. A quorum was confirmed.

**Nomination and Voting for New WUOLAC Chairman**

Paul Munguia provided a handout for current and new member describing member's responsibilities as part of WUOLAC. Paul also gave an overview of the responsibilities of the chair and vice chair of WUOLAC.

Russell Hamilton nominated Allen Schreiber to be chair, and Ginger Laird to be vice-chair. Larry West seconded this nomination. All agreed; none opposed.

**Licensing Reports**

Paul Munguia presented statistical reports specifically requested by WUOLAC from the previous August 2, 2012 meeting. These included the average number of attempts a person takes an exam before they pass (broken down by exam type) and average pass rate for paper exams compared to computer-based exams. Paul expressed concern that there is not enough data to truly rely on the statistical data regarding paper exams vs. computer-based exams.

A discussion pursued regarding the computer-based testing (CBT). Russell Hamilton suggested having greater CBT availability throughout the state. Larry West mentioned he had heard of a number of people in the regions having technical problems with the CBT system. Russell Hamilton also suggested possibly integrating the additional CBT fee into the overall

renewal fee. It was suggested that a city will pay a renewal fee, but not an additional fee for the exam to be taken via computer; however, if the additional CBT fee was including in the renewal, the city would most likely cover the entire cost of the exam.

### **Criminal History Update and Additional Issues**

Russell Gardner, Manager of Occupational Licensing, led a discussion regarding the Criminal History notification. Of the approximately 3,200 criminal histories reviewed, 165 were sent to the deputy director recommending action, and nine were identified to take action on. Of these nine, four were revocations and five were denials.

A discussion followed regarding the means in which applicants can submit their criminal history, which include a DPS report and F.A.S.T. Russell Hamilton requested meeting with Paul outside of the meeting to get more specifics of these requirements.

### **Other Business**

*(Normally "Other Business" is reserved for the last agenda item; however, Public Water Supply staff were in attendance and available for questions at this time regarding the guidance addressing direct supervision and process control in a distribution system.)*

Elston Johnson presented a synopsis of the history of the guidance on direct supervision and opened the floor to questions. No questions were offered from the Committee.

### **Licensing Exam Update**

Linda Saladino asked new members to sign and date a nondisclosure form and reiterated the importance of confidentiality regarding exam questions discussed and reviewed as a member of WUOLAC.

She reviewed WUOLAC's part in the process of revising exams and how to respond with comments. Exams revised since the beginning of 2012 and status of revisions going forward were summarized for both new and current members. Since January 2012 the following exams have been revised and reprinted: Class B & C Wastewater Operator, class D Water Operator, class C Surface Water Operator, with the class B Surface Water exam near completion. The goal is to revise the Collection Operator exams by the end of the year.

A summer intern assisted in using current job analysis critical tasks and approved training manuals to reference exam questions on water and wastewater exams. A list of suggested changes, revisions, or items missing from approved training manuals was compiled and will be shared with providers.

Russell Hamilton raised the concern that some rules reference AWWA standards which may also be covered on exams. In order to have access to the standards, an expensive set of AWWA manuals must be purchased, which from his experience, the majority of people (water systems) do not do. Linda reiterated that any standards included in exam questions were also summarized in the training manuals.

### **Safety Instructor Requirements**

Linda Saladino led a discussion regarding Guidance for TCEQ Approval of Safety Training, Instructors, and Subject-matter Experts. Specifically, Linda sought member's feedback regarding the question of, "If the instructor does not currently have a TCEQ occupational license or qualify for a license, the following may be considered on a case-by-case basis:

- Has at least 3 years of safety-related work experience & expert knowledge in either the utility or industrial setting, can obtain and maintain class D level water and wastewater licenses, and will ensure at least a class B or higher TCEQ-licensed individual will be in the class room.
- Has at least 3 years of experience working in a water or wastewater facility in a safety-related capacity and obtained and maintains a safety-related certification.
- Has at least 3 years of safety-related work experience & expert knowledge and can team teach with a TCEQ-licensed individual who can relate the safety concepts to the critical tasks for the licensing program.
- Has at least 3 years as a firefighter (certified to the level of basic or above) and/or EMS experience( related to the critical tasks and will either ensure at least a class B or higher TCEQ-licensed individual will be in the class to team teach with a TCEQ-licensed individual.”

*First bullet point:* WUOLAC in general did not support the idea of requiring a person, not associated with the provider, with a B level license just to be in the room. They felt the provider/instructor should be the person with the knowledge & experience to relate the concepts to the operators’ critical tasks and not rely on someone else in the room. Russell Hamilton stressed that their intent was not to discourage new trainers from getting into the field, but rather to uphold the current level of integrity and professionalism. Ray Gooden agreed that they do not want a non-licensed person training a licensed person and that the trainer should have at least a B level license. The group advised that this bullet not be used to meet the qualified instructor requirements.

*Second bullet point:* Ginger Laird spoke supporting this bullet point because of her experience with the safety trainer in her utility who has since earned a B-level license; an operator may not necessarily know all the safety requirements. More information regarding the safety professional certification would be gathered to finally determine if these qualifications would be sufficient.

*Third bullet point:* The group could support this bullet point if the instructor was required to have at least a B level license.

*Fourth bullet point:* The group requested this bullet point be clarified to state that the firefighter will have at least a Basic Firefighter certification and the EMS will be at least a certified Emergency Medical Technician.

## **Broke for Lunch**

### **Other Business:**

Linda Saladino led a discussion regarding how a webcast or webinar may be conducted in order to earn renewal training credit and shared a draft list of minimum requirements for WUOLAC’s consideration and comment. The primary concerns were how to ensure the person sitting for the broadcast is actually the person who they claim to be, ensuring students are actively participating the entire time, and can the provider demonstrate the student learned via an assessment. Additionally, members relayed experiences with individuals

writing down answers to an evaluation and sharing this information with others to get credit. Russell Hamilton told of his experience using voice biometrics as a means of verifying a person's identity.

Lastly, Linda reviewed the amended language describing acceptable topics in the core course, Water Utility Management, found in the Curriculum Guidance for Water and Wastewater Operator Training. Changes to this course summary were based on earlier WUOLAC discussions. WUOLAC also suggested the words "transitions" and "security" be added. Concerns remain about topics relating directly to utility management and qualifications of management instructors and SME presenters. These will be topics for future WUOLAC discussions. See amended paragraph below:

### Water Utility Management

Water Utility Management is a comprehensive course including discussions specific to utilities on the following topics: the **transition to** management, communication, decision-making, delegation, **goal/objective setting and** time management, organizational structure, job classifications and interviews, personnel policies, new employee orientation, job performance reviews, motivation, leadership, discipline and personnel problems, ~~counseling the employee, the grievance process,~~ public relations/public education, facility record keeping and reporting, **budgeting and basic financial management, ethics, interaction with governmental entities, contracting professional services,** safety program considerations, work force education and training, emergency preparedness plans, emergency/**disaster** planning, **system security**, and community right-to-know.

WUOLAC previously recommended the following topics be removed from the core course: privatization and underground storage tank issues.

**1:15 p.m.** Adjourn