

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
WATER UTILITY OPERATOR LICENSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

January 22, 2014
9:30 a.m.

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

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 AM

Quorum Check

WUOLAC Members

Gary Sober
Mark Rich
Leonard Leinfelder
Ginger Laird
Roy Staggs
Russell Hamilton
Michael Urrutia
Robb Starr

WUOLAC members (not in attendance)

Ray Gooden
Bobby Russell
Allen Schreiber

TCEQ Staff

Russ Gardner
Ivan Messer
Linda Saladino
Paula Grabowski
Paul Munguia

Approval of Minutes

The committee voted to approve the meeting minutes from August 1, 2013.

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

Leonard Leinfelder, Chair of the Education Sub-Committee

One item discussed was sustainability of the operator workforce. High school programs are being developed to teach Basic Water & Wastewater by pairing with a utility to give students an insight into a career in utility operations. Note from Linda Saladino: utilities must be approved for the courses, provide a qualified instructor, and notify the TCEQ of this program and what else they are doing as part of the curriculum to provide context to high school students like plant facility tours, hands-on activities or labs, etc.

TEEX is partnering with a utility and providing the correspondence version of the basic courses.

Announcement that proposed Rule changes, to incorporate new Legislation, will be heard by the TCEQ Commissioners on January 29, 2014.

Paul Munguia, Permitting and Registration Support

Paul informed the group that the proposed Rule changes were going through the rulemaking process and information could be found on the TCEQ website.

Status of appointing new member to WUOLAC

Paul Munguia, Permitting and Registration Support

Paul informed the group that our recommendations for appointments for WUOLAC membership would be going before our Commissioners for a final decision on May 14, 2014.

Status of Criminal History Background checks process and plan for the future.

Paul Munguia, Permitting and Registration Support

Paul informed the group the our section have been working to streamline the background check process to allow an individual to check a box if they have already submitted their criminal history background with TCEQ and their history has not changed.

Brief update on South Central Membrane Association (SCMA)'s desire to have a TCEQ membrane operator license.

Linda Saladino, Permitting and Registration Support

This discussion was a continuation of the discussion from Leonard Leinfelder's DWAWG Education Sub-committee discussion on changes to licensing of water operators. Linda provided a summary of a 1/9/14 meeting with members of the South Central Membrane Association (SCMA). SCMA is in the process of creating a series of training courses and qualifying instructors to teach the courses once approved. SCMA envisions training for a membrane operator license building on the current requirements for a class C Surface Water license.

WUOLAC members generally felt if public health through substandard water quality was at risk, additional training and licensing was warranted. Water quality data was not available for review to determine if there were concerns with membrane treatment plant water quality produced. One of the problems mentioned was the high cost of replacing membranes when damaged by ill-advised operator activities. If the manufacturer was not providing sufficient training to avoid these problems, it did not necessarily warrant a separate license.

It was reiterated that according to current policy, TCEQ cannot create a new licensing program without the direction and authorization of the legislature. There must be a demonstrated need. Recent job analyses did not get a large number of responses from membrane operators; the tasks were moved into the critical category as part of the SME review. A brief overview of membrane treatment is currently included in the core courses Surface Water Production I & II.

Provide an overview regarding some of the difficulties encountered regarding practical skills and proctor qualifications for the BPAT exam.

Linda Saladino, Permitting and Registration Support

BPAT licensing is a program blended from requirements in various plumbing codes and national licensing programs including the American Backflow Prevention Association (ABPA) and the Association of Sanitary Sewer Engineers (ASSE). TCEQ monitors statewide enforcement of cross-connection control programs administered predominately through utility systems.

The challenge and goal is to create procedures and forms reflecting the testing procedures required in the BPAT licensing training course. A draft performance exam record sheet with a list of deductions

for non-critical to critical mistakes was prepared for review by the BPAT exam work group on 3/5/14. It was suggested the TCEQ test and report form in 30 TAC 290 be used as a template for the form filled in by applicants during the hands-on practical test.

Discussion and consensus is still required for the number of assemblies to test with a malfunction/troubleshooting required, the final form, and how to provide proctor training. Current instructors with experience proctoring the performance exam will meet proctor qualifications, but may still need to “pass” the training to demonstrate proficiency with the TCEQ process.

Other Business

Adjourn

DRAFT