

*Texas Commission on Environmental Quality*  
**WATER UTILITY OPERATOR LICENSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**March 12, 2010**  
**9:30 a.m.**

**TCEQ**  
**12100 Park 35 Circle, Bldg. A, 1st Flr., Rm. 172**  
**Austin, Texas**

**MINUTES**

**Members Attending**

Russell L. Hamilton, Chair  
Matthew Boober, Vice-Chair  
Carol. V. Batterton  
James. W. Fischer  
Ginger Laird  
William Quinn  
Carola G. Serrato  
Ghulam Sumdani  
Michael Vollmar  
Larry West

**Members Absent**

Mark Routon  
Robert Rowell

**TCEQ Staff Attending**

Brian Lehmkuhle, PRS  
Barbara Mendieta, PRS  
Sarita Nazareth, PRS  
Linda Saladino, PRS  
Terry Thompson, PRS

Mr. 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 January 15, 2010 meeting were approved.

**Changing the Experience Requirements for the “A” Water License**

Ms. Calhoun distributed a copy of Subchapter K, Public Water System Operators and Operations Companies and a copy of Subchapter J, Wastewater Operators and Operations Companies, that became effective September 27, 2007. She initiated a discussion about what experience is acceptable for the issuance of a Class “A” Water License. Should someone having only distribution experience be eligible to obtain an A Water License? Currently, the Wastewater licensing program requires an individual to have half of the required experience in treatment and the other half can be substituted with collection experience at a 50% rate. Should the Water licensing program revise the rules requiring an individual to have half of the required experience in treatment (ground and/or surface) before any distribution experience is applicable? The members agreed to form a subcommittee and make a recommendation to TCEQ.

## **Webinars**

Following the WUOLAC meeting on August 28, 2009 a subcommittee consisting of Ms. Batterton, Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Vollmar met with TCEQ management on September 18, 2009 to discuss licensing credit for Webinars. As a result of this meeting and subsequent discussions with TCEQ staff, The WUOLAC recommended that TCEQ develop unique criteria for the approval and delivery of webinars for operator licensing credit. These criteria should include the following considerations:

- Webinar credit hours should be allowed for renewal only and may be allowed for all classes of operators or could be restricted to only certain classes of operators.
- Webinars could be approved using the criteria similar to “Training at Conferences”; however, most webinars will not meet the 3 hour minimum required in RG-373 for training at conferences. TCEQ should consider allowing approval for less than 3 hours of training credit by webinars.
- TCEQ should work with Training Providers to develop a system for monitoring attendance at Webinars that is not burdensome for training providers or attendees.
- TCEQ should work with providers to develop a process to record and verify attendance when multiple licensees are viewing the webinar on one monitor.
- Webinar providers should be required to maintain the records and comply with TCEQ’s electronic reporting requirements.

- TCEQ should consider ways to streamline the process for approval of webinars.

### **Topics for Water Utility Management**

Ms. Saladino summed up the recommendations sent in by 3 of the members. The recommendations included adding Financial Management or Budgeting, interaction with Government bodies and Ethics as important topics for the course. Deleting the topics of Underground Storage and Total Quality Management was also recommended.

### **Review of the Results of the Regulatory Analysis**

Ms. Saladino discussed the Regulatory Analysis report for Surface Water Treatment Operations.

The conclusions are listed below:

- Based on the comparative benchmarking, Texas has established a set of licensing requirements that directly correlate work performed to license required. This essentially yields the same if not better protections as the point rating systems and does so with significantly less complexity.
- Recognizing the trend toward more blended water, the focus on surface water treatment is highly appropriate.
- There seems to be no system within those states examined that would offer compelling reasons to alter the basic approach used in Texas.
- Texas still uses number of connections to determine surface water system size whereas some other states are using water production rate per day to determine size and operator qualifications.
- There should be continued vigilance to the rapidly changing environment of systems and technology so that the jobs of these operators can be appropriately evaluated, training adjusted appropriately with the required adjustments to the examinations to assure continued protection of public health.

The survey for Surface Water operators will be available online by April, 2010. Operators will receive 2 hours of training credit to complete the survey.

### **Report on the Texas Government Code for Advisory Committees.**

Ms. Nazareth read Title 10, Subtitle C, Chapter 2110, Sec. 551.042 titled “Inquiry made at Meeting”

(a) If, at a meeting of a governmental body, a member of the public or of the governmental body inquires about a subject for which the notice has not been given as required by this subchapter, the provisions of this subchapter do not apply to:

1. a statement of factual information given in response to the inquiry; or
2. a recitation of existing policy in response to the inquiry,

(b) Any deliberation of or decision about the subject of the inquiry shall be limited to a proposal to place the subject on the agenda for a subsequent meeting.

### **Certification Regarding Package Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants**

Mr. Sumdani raised the issue that it might be useful to have a license (or certification) for persons who only run package water and wastewater plants. This question was brought up to Mr. Sumdani during one of his training sessions. Mr. Hamilton and James Fischer were among those who asked questions or made comments on this proposal. On the wastewater side, it was unclear why a licensing distinction would be made, since the treatment processes involved are not really different in a package plant than they would be in larger scale facilities. In treating for drinking water, while there might be more special use of membranes (as an example), it was not clear what aspect in itself justified an entire level of licensing. Additionally, for water or wastewater licensing, there is an understanding that a minimum level of competency is needed; all students need to have a basic knowledge of the industry in order to obtain a license. At the end of the discussion, no further action on this item was recommended.

### **Recommendations to amend the Renewal Requirements for Basic water and Wastewater Licenses**

Mr. Hamilton made a motion that Basic Water and Basic Wastewater Courses no longer be used for operator license renewal at any level. This motion was seconded by Mr. Boober and endorsed by Mr. Quinn, Mr. West

and Ms. Laird. Mr. Vollmar was in opposition of the motion. Mr. Hamilton added that the Committee would submit a recommendation to the TCEQ.

### **Other Business**

The dates of the Water and Wastewater Training Provider seminar were announced. The Seminar will be held on July 19, 20 and 21, 2010 right here at the TCEQ.

The committee proposed to have the next meeting in June.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.