

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
WATER UTILITY OPERATOR LICENSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

May 3, 2012
10:00 a.m.

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

MINUTES

Members Attending:

Russell Hamilton
James Fischer
Ginger Laird
Bill Quinn
Allen Schreiber
Michael Vollmar
Larry West (Acting Chair)
Roy Staggs
Ghulam Sumdani

Members Absent:

Matthew Boober
Bobby Russell
Sharon Clark
Adrian Montemayor

TCEQ Staff Attending:

Russell Gardner
Ivan Messer
Alicia Diehl
James Beauchamp
June Ella Martinez
Linda Saladino
Joseph Hildenbrand
Barbara Mendieta
Paul Munguia

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by Larry West, Acting Chair of WUOLAC. A quorum was confirmed. The members and TCEQ staff was introduced. The minutes of the October 21, 2011 meeting were approved.

Update on new TCEQ procedures/WUOLAC nomination process

Paul Munguia gave a brief update regarding the nomination process of new WUOLAC members. This item will go before the TCEQ commissioners on August 8, 2012.

Paul Munguia also gave a presentation of the new Occupational Licensing website and organization. The goal of the new revisions is to increase ease and usability.

Paul Munguia led a discussion regarding establishing set quarterly meeting dates for future WUOLAC meetings. A final decision was not made; however, the group generally agreed that the first Thursday at 9:30 AM would be a good time to meet quarterly. Additionally, the group was receptive to the idea of having a working lunch where all members of the attending meeting would contribute financially to have a lunch delivered.

Direct Supervision Policy Update

June Ella Martinez and James Beauchamp from the TCEQ Public Drinking Water section gave a presentation regarding a new policy that updates what tasks in a distribution system require the individual to be licensed and what tasks require an individual to be under the direct supervision of a licensed operator.

WUOLAC's Comments:

- With this new policy, why is there a need for a distribution license?
- If a supervisor can contract people, then why license their employees?
- Generally felt that these guidelines are not enforceable because they are not in rules.
- They expressed concern that the new policy may result in one distribution operator being responsible for the direct supervision of many individuals working on distribution systems and that this may lead to individuals performing tasks that they are not fully qualified to perform.
- The commission needs to better define "onsite" and "direct supervisor".
- During line leak repair, the system is most susceptible to contamination and should be supervised.
- Allowing direct supervision to be by electronic means without the licensed operator ever being onsite will lead to unlicensed individuals being allowed to perform work with no operator training/license possibly endangering public health?
- Disagreed in particular with flushing (unless samples taken) and disinfecting a new line as not to be considered process control.
- Turning valves in a distribution system is necessary to isolate parts of the systems for flushing & repairs; If performed incorrectly, you may have a pressure maintenance issue which WUOLAC felt was essential for public health protection.

TCEQ advised the WUOLAC member to submit their questions and concerns in writing so they could be individually reviewed and receive a response. Paul Munguia will be the point of contact.

Discussion regarding the Requirement to have Individuals wait 60 Days in between Exam Retests

This discussion was led by Russell Gardner of the Occupational Licensing section. The discussion covered the 30 TAC §30.20 requirement to have individuals wait 60 Days in between exam retest. A list of pros and cons were discussed and deliberated. The WUOLAC's member's main concern about removing the 60 days to retest requirement was that test takers may be able to memorize test questions if they are allowed to retake the test within a short amount of time. Additionally, the time is necessary to allow TCEQ staff to grade the exams. If left in place, the 60 days would allow a test taker to get their result and have sufficient time to study before retaking the exam. Russell indicated that a portion of future WUOLAC meetings will be appropriated to cover potential new rules.

Discussion on the WUOLAC Recommendation regarding CEU Credit for the Basic Water/Wastewater course at the C and D license levels

This discussion was led by Joseph Hildenbrand of the Occupational Licensing section. Joseph presented a report showing the percentage of CEU hours being obtained by operators completing a Basic Water/Wastewater course at each license level. WUOLAC discussed the merits of allowing C & D level licensees to take this basic course multiple times and receive CEU credits.

WUOLAC's Comments:

- A licensee can always learn something new from training, even at the basic level;
- If TCEQ required C & D level licensees to take other courses, this would expand their knowledge leading to more competent employees; and
- Requiring different courses would improve exam pass rates in the long run.

TCEQ's Comments:

- D level operators that only perform basic water/wastewater duties may benefit from retaking the basic water course because it will serve as a refresher of the knowledge that they need in their everyday activities.

Joseph informed the WUOLAC that he has started a conversation with the Public Drinking Water division about the WUOLAC's recommendation regarding changes to the experience requirements needed to obtain an A level Water license. Joseph indicated that a portion of future WUOLAC meetings will be appropriated to review progress on the WUOLAC recommendations.

Update on new B/C Wastewater Exam and Exam Development Process

This presentation was led by Linda Saladino of Permitting and Registration Support. Topics covered were:

- Review class C wastewater operator exam revisions & process
- Discuss WUOLAC member contributions to revision process
- Discuss proposed plan for the class B wastewater operator exam revision.

TCEQ staff explained how exam questions are derived and how exams are administered. Staff seeks input from WUOLAC members, as experts in the field, on whether proposed exam questions reflect critical tasks and new technology, are compliant with rules and industry practices, and are technically correct and clear.

Other Business

WUOLAC would like to receive presentation materials prior to the meetings so they will have time to review and discuss.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 1:40 PM