

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Cross-Connection Control Subcommittee

June 3, 2021

Microsoft Teams Webinar

Time: 9:00 – 12:30

Commencement

Ms. Katherine McGlaughlin

The meeting commenced on time with the general announcements and introductions by meeting participants.

The motion was then made to adopt the meeting summary. A second to the motion was heard and the vote to adopt was unanimous.

The next meeting of this Subcommittee will be held on September 2, 2021.

Update from Cross-Connection Control Program

Ms. Katherine McGlaughlin

Ms. Katherine McGlaughlin, TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Program, provided program updates.

Cross-Connection Control Program surveys continue at public water systems that have been identified by TCEQ regional investigators as benefitting from this form of technical assistance. Suggestions for systems to receive surveys can be submitted to the TCEQ for issues such as: staff turnover, customer complaints, a lack of a Cross Connection Control Program, and others. Staff recently received a list of survey candidates from the Office of Compliance, and are in the process of being assigned.

The Annual Public Drinking Water Conference is scheduled for August 10 & 11. The Cross Connection Control program plans to provide 2 presentations with a focus on cross connection control and emergency response. These presentations will be presented by both Katherine McGlaughlin and Kenneth Dykes.

At this time, the Cross Connection Control Program is researching the potential to do a hybrid meeting that will take place in the office that will also be able to be streamed or viewed online. At this time, the Central Campus is closed to the public, save for services that require an appointment (such as the Central File Room). We continue to monitor the Agency guidelines to see when and how we can make this a success in the future.

Update from Landscape Irrigation

Ms. Chelsea Atkinson

Ms. Chelsea Atkinson and Mr. Kenneth Smith, TCEQ Office of Compliance and Enforcement, provided an update on the Landscape Irrigation Program (LIP).

The LIP continues to receive a high volume of calls and emails. Specifically, since the previous Irrigator Advisory Council Meeting, the program fielded 4 new complaints incidents. Two investigations are currently pending, and 1 has been approved - a further 8 incidents are currently in the review process. Advertising without a valid license has been the most common source of complaints.

The public can utilize the Landscape Irrigation General Complaint Form (TCEQ Form 10380) to report Landscape Irrigation issues for further investigation. TCEQ Form 10380 is available on the TCEQ LIP website or directly at:

- www.tceq.texas.gov/assets/public/compliance/compliance_support/regulatory/irrigation/forms_li/10380.pdf

Mr. Kenneth Smith indicated the Program recently published an updated version of RG-470 “Landscape Irrigator's Rule Compilation” with the most recent rule updates. The Program is currently in the process of revising RG-466 “Landscape Irrigation Program: Implementation”.

The Landscape Irrigation Program is currently looking for education opportunities for the general public and regulated community. Suggestions and shows can be suggested to the LIP via their email address at install@tceq.texas.gov.

Update from Occupational Licensing

Ms. Shannon Watson

Ms. Shannon Watson, TCEQ Occupational Licensing (OL), provided an update from the OL section.

In the 3rd Quarter (March 1, 2020 - May 31, 2020), 198 new Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester (BPAT) license applications were received along with 448 renewal applications. Out of the 200 tests administered, 93 passed., resulting in a 46.5% passing rate. This brings the total number of BPAT licenses in the State of Texas to 5,481.

In the 3rd Quarter, OL Received 82 new Customer Service Inspector (CSI) applications and 170 renewal applications. 104 tests were administered with 47 having passed, resulting in a 45.2% pass rate. This brings the number of total licensed CSIs to 2,109.

A notice has been posted to the Occupational Licensing page in regards to COVID updates. For BPAT licensees renewing and applying October 1 or later, the 8-hours hands practical is required to be completed. For licensees renewing between March 2020 and thru September 21, the practical 8 hours requirement will be waived, but only temporarily. With vaccine access improving and facilities reopening, the 8 hour practical can be safely scheduled in-person. If there is difficulty finding a location to take the practical, contact the OL email via licenses@tceq.texas.gov for assistance.

The OL Division acknowledges the difficulty to maintain continuing education, creating flexibility in renewal requirements. As we return to normalcy, that flexibility is declining and certain revision needs are being identified. At this time, State Law allows 30 days after expiration “grace period” to get renewal without penalty. The Program is considering redoing certain exams as listed in Texas Administrative Code. After COVID started, the Division have approved 200+ online courses across all license types. New computer testing centers are opening up across the state, including a center in Lubbock and Levelland, and more are under discussion.

The Division encourages licensees to track license expiration, renewal requirements, and any application deficiencies on their website. The Division also reminds licensees they can acquire continuing education credit hours throughout their 3-year expiration period. Reach out to OL if there is a deficiency you need to or have already fixed. Exception requests are still handled on a per-license basis, and OL can assist with questions as they arise.

Emerging From Quarantine & Backflow Industry

Group Discussion

Mrs. Katherine McGlaughlin introduced this topic. As we return to “normalcy” at the TCEQ, what are some of the things your companies, water suppliers, groups doing to reintegrate?

At this point, the TCEQ is monitoring the situation and attempting to create a hybrid meeting system for future Subcommittee meetings. Other systems and testers noted masks, vaccines, and social distancing are being required for their staff. This information is often provided to customers to improve relations and maintain transparent communication. As the Quarantine/pandemic continues, staff anticipate further adaptations and changes are yet to occur. This topic will be revisited in the future as conditions evolve.

Kidney Dialysis Machines

Group Discussion

Mr. Fred Baird, Bac-Flo Unlimited, brought up the topic of new Kidney Dialysis machine “Tablo” appearing throughout the State. Mr. Adam Smith indicated along with Mr. Chuck Deathridge (not in attendance) encountered such machines in the City of Austin.

Adam Smith noted that, currently in the City of Austin water supply, if a medical center has a dedicated water supply line for dialysis machines, they don’t require individual dialysis treatment chairs. Instead backflow prevention is required at the source of treatment before heading down the lines to the dialysis machines. The end purpose is looped and safe. This new kidney dialysis machine in mind has water treatment for each chair. They are currently installed with single checks and with no fail safe relief valve. The machine features a series of redundant micorn filters, inline filters, and disposable biohazard attachments. The plumbing makeup leading into these machines are not known. Mr. Smith noted that the manufacturer is the only group that performs maintenance or work on these machines to ensure their operation. At this time, the City of Austin is leaning towards having each machine have backflow preventers since the proposed machines are directly linked in to the Hospital water line.

Mr. Paul Schwartz, former University of Southern California staff, noted that manufacturers such as these are close lipped on how the hydraulics work. In general, they want to avoid reduced pressure principal backflow prevention assemblies (RPBAs) since the relief valve can be a potential vector. In addition, brass assemblies pose a hazard to patients and the loss of water pressure from a RPBA may interfere with the machine’s operation. At this point, members of the subcommittee recommended against retrofitting to prevent potential impacts on patients.

Attendees who have observed these machines noted that the manufacturer’s schematic was unclear as to how it worked and functioned. Some were required to sign nondisclosure agreements as well. One major concern raised was that unit is unplugged or not working, resulting in potentially unsafe static water. Systems with these machines and concerns have implemented containment, or leased them with assemblies installed on them.

Mr. Baird noted, as with previous experiences with soda machine manufacturers, the TCEQ may need to meet and discuss with dialysis device’s manufacturer.

Possible Topics for Next Meeting

Mr. Kelly Stalder, Texas Fire Marshall’s Office, noted the recent February 2021 freeze likely damaged hundreds of backflows. This may have resulted in potentially millions of dollars in repair needs in

locations never considered susceptible to freezing. Some local authorities require vault installation, but not all do. The Subcommittee discussed if the TCEQ would implement installation changes, but determined installation changes would be on the local level, and not with the TCEQ. Further exploration of local requirements may be discussed in the future.