

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
WATER UTILITY OPERATOR LICENSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

May 28, 2021
9:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting through Microsoft Teams

Meeting Minutes

Members Attending

Larry Bell
David Garza
Paul Kite
Crystal Ybanez
David Harris
Karen Menard
Cory Moose
Kenny Hutchins
Celia Eaves
Robb Starr
Jake Hollingsworth

Members Absent

Russell Hamilton
Joseph McDaniel

Visitors

James Fischer
Gary Sober
Ariane Walker
Steve Ash

TCEQ Staff Attending

Jaya Zyman, Occupational Licensing and Registration Division (OLRD)
Rebecca Moore, OLRD
Shannon Watson, OLRD
Paul Munguia, OLRD
James Murphy, OLRD
Laia Robichaux, OLRD
Benjamin Sakmar, OLRD
Tamara Calhoun, OLRD
Laurie Fleet, WQD
Dorothy Young, WSD
Leticia DeLeon, WSD
Jason Robinson, PPE

Call to order:

Quorum check – quorum present.

A motion to approve the meeting minutes from January 20, 2021 was made by David Garza, seconded by Joseph McDaniel, all members approved.

Attendee introduction:

All current and new members introduced themselves.

Water Supply Division (WSD) Updates: Dorothy Young

Plan and Technical Review Section Update

- A survey will be sent out regarding the winter storm and what type of training may be needed as a result.
- Some legislation may be passed affecting the section, but for now they are waiting to see what the Governor will sign.
- Public Drinking Water Conference will be held virtually again this year and will take place the first week of August.

Water Supply Division (WSD) Updates: Leticia DeLeon

Drinking Water Assessment Team Update

- The team is preparing for the upcoming lead and copper rule reduction monitoring period. As a reminder, ensure your sample sites are up to date. The TCEQ cannot accept samples dated from an unapproved site or from incorrectly documented sample sites. Double check your paperwork and provide samples to your lab early in the compliance period. All samples must be collected during the monitoring period and results must be received by the 10th day after the close of the period. If you do not submit samples until the end of the compliance period or after the compliance period, the lab cannot perform an analysis. Such late reporting may result in a violation being issued to the water system.
- Revised total coliform and groundwater rule: please ensure your sample siting plan is up to date and operators are trained on repeat and trigger source monitoring sampling protocols. Failure to properly collect repeat samples can trigger a level 1 assessment for your water system.
- The [2020 Consumer Confidence Report](#) is now live.
- In the first quarter of 2021, we received 2,853 boil water notifications. Of these, 2,367 were issued as a result of the winter storm and overall, 2,747 were rescinded.

Water Quality Division (WQD) Updates: Laurie Fleet

- Wastewater treatment plant sludge reports due in September is now required to be submitted electronically, using [NET](#). From the TCEQ homepage, search on “NET DMR.”

Occupational Licensing Updates: Shannon Watson

- Licensing numbers for the second quarter of 2021 are attached. The licensing group is currently fully staffed, and we are getting caught up on licensing applications.
- Currently there are four exams that are translated in Spanish and available through paper exams. These exams are all entry level exams: Water D, Wastewater D, Wastewater Collection III, and Irrigation Technician.

- The group asked how many double A (holding both a water and wastewater license) there currently are. There are 387.

Water/Wastewater Licensee Trends and Education Program: Jaya Zyman

Jaya gave a presentation addressing the need for more water and wastewater operators in Texas. As the population of Texas greatly increases, the projected demand for operators will increase. Trends show that the number of new operators entering the field may not meet this demand. The TCEQ has a three-pronged approach to address this issue. First, the TCEQ is working with ISDs to develop high school programs to obtain a water or wastewater entry level license. Once the student turns 18, they can receive the license. Second, the TCEQ is working with community colleges to develop a program where the student would receive college credit while obtaining a license. Lastly, we are working to relaunch a program to issue certificates for non-violent prisoners, where, upon release and criminal history evaluation, they could receive a license.

Karen Menard mentioned that the Dallas ISD and prison would be interested in these programs. She also asked who would provide this training. Jaya explained that instructors would be approved, just as all other instructors are approved.

Shannon Watson noted that there are many ISD programs that are either interested or actively seeking approval. We will look to consolidating the programs to develop a state standard.

Transitioning Provisional Online Approvals to Fully Approved: Ben Sakmar

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced training providers to cancel in-person classroom training in accordance with local, state, and national safety guidelines. To maintain access to training necessary for earning new and renewal of current licenses, the Occupational Licensing Section of the TCEQ developed a protocol where providers could gain provisional approval to offer previously approved classroom courses as live-online training on a temporary basis. This guidance outlines the requirements for transitioning a provisional live-online course approval to a formal live-online course approval.

The transition process from provisional to formal approval requires that the training manual, instructional materials, qualified instructors, and general course agenda remain the same based on the original approval for the classroom course. If any significant changes or additional components are added to the training (e.g. videos), these must be reported to the TCEQ training staff for a full review.

Since all provisional approvals are TCEQ-approved classroom training content, only the information and materials specific to the use of a live-online platform must be re-

submitted to the TCEQ training staff for the transition from provisional to formal approval. Providers must submit an application for the course(s) they intend to transition from provisional to formal approval. The application requires the provider to provide details regarding identity verification, monitoring comprehension and participation, interactivity, course procedures for technical registration and support, and learning environment.

The group generally felt in-person training is a better delivery method but recognized the need and convenience for the students. Some stated that online training presented a problem because when students are not in a classroom environment, they are often distracted by other things. Regarding multiple people attending training using a single computer, for example at a utility, Larry Bell asked who would be the proctor. Ben clarified that the proctor could be an employee or supervisor from the utility; it would not need to be a TCEQ employee.

Shannon Watson asked the group if a six month lead up time would be enough to implement this project. James Fischer of TEEEX felt that six months was reasonable.

Other Topics

Shannon asked the group their preference for future WUOLAC meetings, either in person or virtual. The group preferred to meet in person. A request was made to consider a hybrid approach to these meetings. Once deemed safe, meetings will resume in person and we will look into the possibility of a hybrid option.

Adjourn

Karen Menard made a motion to adjourn. Robb Starr seconded the motion.

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