

# Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

## WATER UTILITY OPERATOR LICENSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

October 14, 2020

9:00 a.m.

*Virtual Meeting through Microsoft Teams*

### Meeting Minutes

#### **Members Attending**

Larry Bell  
David Garza  
Crystal Ybanez  
Kenneth Hutchins  
Jake Hollingsworth  
Karen Menard  
Cory Moose  
Joseph McDaniel  
Celia Eaves  
Russell Hamilton  
Robb Starr

#### **Members Absent**

David Harris  
Paul Kite

#### **Visitors**

Steve Ash  
James Fischer  
Kyle Duane  
Michael Urrutia  
Nichol Howell  
Steve Ash

#### **TCEQ Staff Attending**

Jaya Zyman, Occupational Licensing and Registration Division (OLRD)  
Shannon Watson, OLRD  
Paul Munguia, OLRD  
James Murphy, OLRD  
Laia Robichaux, OLRD  
Benjamin Sakmar, OLRD  
Laurie Fleet, WQD  
Dorothy Young, WSD

#### **Call to order:**

Quorum check – quorum present.

A motion to approve the meeting minutes from July 22, 2020, was made by Robb Starr, all members approved.

#### **Attendee introduction:**

All current and new members introduced themselves.

#### **Water Quality Division (WQD) Updates: Laurie Fleet**

The Water Treatment Plant General Permit was approved and issued at the October 7, 2020, commissioner's agenda. This permit authorizes the discharge of wastewater generated as a result of conventional water treatment at water treatment facilities into or adjacent to Waters of the State. Permittees with an individual permit do not have to wait until their current permit expires to get authorization under this general permit. This is limited to conventional treatment facilities, not for those using special treatment processes, such as RO, ion exchange, treatment for metals, or arsenic. Qualifying treatment facilities can apply for general permit authorization and cancel their individual permit. Details of the permit can be found by searching for "available general permits" from the main page of the [TCEQ website](#).

#### **Water Supply Division (WSD) Updates: Dorothy Young**

*Notification of Change to Report for Membrane Plants*

The TCEQ has determined that a change is needed at public water systems (PWSs) with surface water treatment plants (SWTPs) using low pressure membranes for pathogen removal. All PWSs with this type of treatment process must regularly pass a direct integrity test (DIT) to prove the membrane units can remove pathogens. TCEQ is changing one of the pressure values that must be reported on the surface water monthly operating report (SWMOR-ALT). The TCEQ developed an updated version of the SWMOR-ALT for this change. **All membrane plants must begin using the updated version and reporting the changed pressure value on or before April 1, 2021.** A letter explaining this change was mailed on October 16, 2020, to all impacted PWSs.

To assist PWSs that use low pressure membranes for pathogen removal with the transition to using the new SWMOR-ALT, the TCEQ is offering training. The training will be virtual and PWSs will be matched with a small group of similar systems. In the trainings, TCEQ staff will explain the reason for the change, address future DIT requirements, answer questions, and cover data requirements for membrane plants. To receive an invitation to the training, you must: submit an email to [PTRS@tceq.texas.gov](mailto:PTRS@tceq.texas.gov); include “Membrane Training 2020” in the subject; and provide your PWS ID, plant name(s), and the email addresses for invitations.

To briefly explain the issue: currently PWSs that use low pressure membranes for pathogen removal report two values for each DIT, the pressure at the start of each DIT and the rate of change in the pressure during the test. The updated version of SWMOR-ALT requires PWSs to report the lowest pressure that occurred during the DIT instead of the pressure at the start of the DIT. The lowest pressure typically occurs at the end of a DIT. PWSs must continue reporting the DIT starting pressure on the current version of the SWMOR-ALT until they begin reporting the lowest pressure on the updated version.

By April 1, 2021, the lowest pressure during a DIT must be above the TCEQ-approved minimum pressure (P<sub>test</sub>) for a unit to pass a DIT. This change may require reprogramming of the membrane programmable logic controller (PLC), the supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system, shutdown alarms, daily reports, and/or system storing historical data.

TCEQ will email a copy of the updated SWMOR-ALT to each PWS after they attend the training. For PWSs that do not attend a training session, the new version of the SWMOR-ALT will be available on the TCEQ website on April 1, 2021. For PWSs who schedule a training date, TCEQ will send them new DIT parameters in advance of the training session. For all others, new DIT parameters will be mailed by March 1, 2021.

To summarize, all PWSs that use low pressure membranes for pathogen removal must begin using the updated SWMOR-ALT and reporting the lowest pressure during each DIT on or before April 1, 2021. These PWSs must submit the April 2021 SWMOR-ALT by May 10, 2021, with TCEQ form 20889 certifying the facility reported the lowest pressure during each DIT and providing verification data.

### ***Plan Review Team (PRT)***

Number of plans and specifications submittals processed by the Plan Review Team in July to September 2020: 635.

**Evaluation for Potential Corrosivity:** In 2016, TCEQ started using industry standard saturation indices to look at water corrosivity in order to evaluate how a new source or change in treatment may impact corrosivity. The three indices TCEQ started with were Langelier Saturation Index, Ryznar Stability Index and the Aggressive Index. Water chemistry in potable water mains is a complex issue with many variants. Just as each water system’s final treated water varies, other factors, such as specific water quality parameter constituent levels, pipe materials, and presence or absence of corrosion control, may contribute to whether a system may become an Action Level Exceeder (ALE). Use of these indices is similar in that they are a potential indicator of future problems. TCEQ uses the indices in a graded approach to determine if additional sampling may be in order when systems request approval of new sources or adds/changes treatments that affect water chemistry. TCEQ has added two more indices to assist this determination. The two indices are Chloride to Sulfate Mass Ratio (CSMR) and the Calcium Carbonate Precipitation Potential (CCPP). Research has shown that the ratio of chloride to sulfate in the water can be an indicator of potential lead release. An evaluation of LCR tap sampling data from 12 drinking water utilities collected as part of a Water Research Foundation (WRF) project found that all of the water systems with chloride-to-sulfate ratios less than 0.58 met the 90th percentile action level for lead, whereas only 40 percent of the systems with

chloride/sulfate ratios greater than 0.58 met the lead action level. TCEQ has also performed similar research on Texas PWSs. The research on Texas PWSs confirmed the WRF research. The CCPP is a more reliable water stability index to use since this index provides a quantitative measure of the calcium carbonate deficit or excess of the water, giving a more accurate guide as to the likely extent of CaCO<sub>3</sub> precipitation that provides a protective coating.

**Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey:** the EPA has indicated the four-year survey of infrastructure needs is on for 2020. The last update from EPA indicated the survey may be released for the accumulation of data in October. TCEQ will be working with the Financial Managerial and Technical Assistance contractor on completion of the surveys for selected PWSs and appreciates the PWSs participation in compilation of this important data. The survey is very important for water systems funding as the sum of the state needs are used to determine the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) allotment Texas will receive.

### **Technical Review and Oversight Team (TROT)**

Number of Exception and Alternative Capacity Requirement requests processed by the Technical Review and Oversight Team during June 2020 – August 2020: 380.

### **Response and Capacity Development Team (RCDT)**

Number of free on-site Financial, Managerial, and Technical (FMT) Assistance assignments made for public water systems by the Response and Capacity Development Team July – October 2020: 123. This number excludes assignments made for wastewater systems and contractor training events.

### **Capacity Development:**

Do you need funding or other assistance? The Texas Water Infrastructure Coordination Committee (TWICC) is an umbrella organization designed to help water and wastewater systems find funding. TWICC is made up of state and federal funding, regulatory and assistance agencies including the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Texas Rural Water Association (TRWA), Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), General Land Office (GLO), Texas American Water Works Association (TAWWA) and Communities Unlimited. The last TWICC meeting was hosted remotely by USDA on July 15, 2020. If you are interested in talking to TWICC members about potential projects, funding and other assistance you can contact Dorothy Young at [dorothy.young@tceq.texas.gov](mailto:dorothy.young@tceq.texas.gov). Information on TWICC members, funding sources and other resource links are available at [www.twicc.org](http://www.twicc.org). The next TWICC meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held online on Wednesday, November 18, 2020. The Public Utility Commission will host.

TCEQ has a new category in the Public Drinking Water Recognition Program called Water Partners: Water Systems Helping Water Systems. You can nominate your water system or someone else's for both informal and formal partnerships. For more information, go to <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/recognition>.

### **Texas Optimization Program (TOP):**

Due to safety concerns during the pandemic, TOP staff and contractors have reduced the number of onsite events. Remote technical assistance is available. For questions, please reach out to TOP staff by emailing [TOP@tceq.texas.gov](mailto:TOP@tceq.texas.gov).

From July to September 2020:

- TOP staff conducted two membrane plant evaluations.
  - TOP staff evaluated a regional raw water distributor.
- The drop in onsite events has provided TOP staff and TOP Support contractors an opportunity to make much needed updates to existing operator and staff training documents and to develop new technical guidance materials. Updates are being made to:
- Directed Assistance Module (DAM) 2A Chemical Dosing
  - DAM 2B SWTP Jar Test
  - DAM 5 Chloramination
  - DAM 10 SWTP Turbidity Data Integrity
  - DAM 12 Cross-Connection Control Program Development

We have also been providing internal training to WSD staff through online meetings.

## **Drought:**

- As of October 1, 2020, approximately 3.29% of the state is in exceptional drought, 8.73% of the state is in extreme drought, 8.89% of the state is in severe drought, 11.05% of the state is in moderate drought, and 10.69% of the state is abnormally dry. 57.35% of the state is not experiencing any drought related issues.
- As of October 1, 2020, the state's monitored water supply reservoirs are 81.2% full, a decrease of 4.5% since July 2020.
- Staff continue to monitor and provide additional resources to one High-Priority system and three Watch List systems until their current projects are completed.

## **Assistance for At-Risk Public Water Systems:**

Staff continue to monitor eleven systems in receivership, eight systems under temporary management and thirteen systems designated as "Primary At-Risk."

## **Cross-Connection Control:**

- Program staff are utilizing Microsoft Teams to conduct remote Cross Connection Control Program surveys to assist systems. One remote survey was conducted this past quarter. Program candidates continue to be identified and scheduled for technical assistance.
- The TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Subcommittee conducted its quarterly meeting remotely on September 3, 2020. It was well attended with participation amongst long time members and new members. Topics discussed included Landscape Irrigation Program rule updates, additions to technical assistance materials, and navigating USC-approved backflow prevention assembly resources. Interested attendees can subscribe to meeting notifications on the TCEQ homepage or can contact Katherine McGlaughlin for more information. Katherine can be reached at [Katherine.McGlaughlin@tceq.texas.gov](mailto:Katherine.McGlaughlin@tceq.texas.gov).
- The Cross-Connection Control Program continues to receive frequent requests for approval of alternate forms.
- Mr. Peter Reitmeyer, contractor with the University of Texas at Arlington, has joined the TCEQ Cross Connection Program.

Lastly, David Garza asked if Dorothy's group speaks directly to the irrigators regarding reclaimed water. Larry Bell attends the Cross Connection Committee as well as the Backflow Committee and said that TCEQ does talk to the irrigators about reclaimed and reuse of water, as well as rainwater harvesting for irrigation purposes.

## **Occupational Licensing Updates: Shannon Watson**

### **Old Business:**

- Status of Computer-Based Testing (CBT) centers in South Texas. TCEQ is working with UT-RGV in Edinburg, TX to become an approved CBT center. This process can take up to six months. We will provide another status update at the next WUOLAC meeting. Karen Menard asked if we had reached out to Texas Tech University to become a CBT center. We have, but at the time Texas Tech declined. Ms. Menard will reach out to Texas Tech University to see if they may now have an interest in becoming a TCEQ CBT center. TCEQ is also working with South Plains Technical College to become an approved CBT center in the Lubbock Region.
- Continuing Education (CE) credit for attending WUOLAC meetings. At this time, we are not going to be providing CE credit. Once in-person meetings resume, we will revisit the request.

### **New Business:**

Attached are the statistical numbers for the licensing team (FY20\_Q4). This data shows the number of applications received and processed, as well as the pass rates of each exam. Karen Menard asked how this data is analyzed. The TCEQ management team tracks this data to ensure trends are normal and there are no major abnormalities to the application and pass rates. This data is shared with WUOLAC as a means of transparency. TCEQ staff is now processing applications at the same rate as pre-pandemic levels, but from home. They are also now answering phone calls in real time from home.

The section has been working to make the CBT an option for as many exams as possible. The Water “A” exam is now available as a six-hour CBT exam. The Wastewater Collection III is also now available as a three-hour CBT exam. By the end of the calendar year, our goal is to have the OSSF II exams available via CBT. The exams that we will work on getting to CBT in the new year are the Wastewater “A”, LPST Corrective Action Project Manager, and Landscape Irrigator exams.

In September, the TCEQ central office started to give in-person paper exams that are not on CBT. Health screenings and social distancing measures have been put in place to ensure the safety of all individuals. We will reach out to TCEQ regions to share our experiences and assist them in issuing in-person exams when they feel the time is right for their region.

The section has waived the 8hr hands-on training requirement for BPAT license renewal through March 2021; however, some providers are offering this training while observing social distancing standards. David Garza asked if we had any issues with people obtaining continuing education hours. The licensing staff will consider all requests for extensions related to the COVID-19 outbreak on a case-by-case basis.

Lastly, David Garza asked if he could get a list of criminal convictions that would prevent a person from obtaining a TCEQ occupational license. Mr. Garza said this would help him in his hiring process. The TCEQ guidance ([RG-521](#)) will be sent. This list is based on the crime and type of license to determine the risk to the public. Individual systems may have different criteria which guide their hiring decision.

## **Adjourn**

Karen Menard made a motion to adjourn, Joseph McDaniel seconded the motion.

## **Contacts:**

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