
Operator Certification

Guidelines for Contract Operations of Water Supplies and Wastewater Treatment Facilities

The State of Kansas, through the Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), administers a mandatory water and wastewater operator certification program. The program was begun in 1975 as a result of laws passed by the Kansas Legislature. The law requires all water supply systems and wastewater treatment facilities to be under the supervision of an operator certified by KDHE. The Legislature realized that proper operation of these facilities was essential to protect the health and environment of Kansans.

- **How the program is administered** – the program is administered through KDHE and provides for five certification levels for each water and wastewater operators. Every water supply system and wastewater treatment facility must be under the operational control of an operator certified at, or above the classification level of the system or facility.

In order to achieve certification, an individual must attain competency through study, training, and on-the-job experience. Once a minimum amount of experience has been gained, the individual must pass a written examination. Upon passing the written examination, KDHE issues a certificate to the operator. The certificate must be renewed every two years. Prior to renewal, operators must attain continuing education in some aspect of their certification area.

If a water supply or wastewater treatment facility wishes, they may contract with a certified operator in lieu of maintaining a full time person on staff. For a listing of operators willing to contract their services please contact us at 785.296.5511. We can supply an up-to-date list of operators who have indicated such an interest.

Guidelines

What you Should Consider When Contracting With a Water Supply or Wastewater Facility Operator

While we cannot provide information on the legal ramifications of a contract for services, we can provide a set of guidelines for what is expected of contract certified operators. **You should always remember, however, that the permit holder for the water supply system or wastewater treatment facility is ultimately liable for complying with the permit, regardless of whether the operator is a full time employee or under contract.** Therefore, a permittee needs to have a clear understanding with any contract operator as to what is expected. The following are our recommended guidelines?

- The operator should routinely inspect the system. This includes any pumping stations. Depending on the type of facility, the inspection frequency can range from once per week to once per day. As a rule of thumb, as the mechanical complexity of a system increases, the frequency of inspection should increase. Another rule of thumb is that is the permittee utilizes a non-certified individual to assist the certified operator, the frequency of inspection by the certified operator can be decreased. The chart on the last page provides our guidelines for inspection frequencies by *certified operators*. If there is a question as to what category a facility is classified, please call us at 785.296.5511 for clarification.
- The operator should be on call for emergency situations. At some point in time most systems have unexpected emergencies. At those times, it is critical that the system's certified operator be available to recommend a course of action to rectify the emergency situation.
- The operator should verify that routine system maintenance schedules are followed.

-
-
- The operator should have clear authority to make operational changes in the system as needed. This is not unlike the operation of any water supply or wastewater treatment system.
 - The operator should inspect any records or reports submitted to KDHE for regulatory purposes. A certified operator should be able to review reports and determine discrepancies with permit conditions.
 - The operator should have clear authority to direct the work of any non-certified staff who provides assistance. If additional non-certified staff is utilized by the permittee, they should be directed by the permittee to carry out the recommendations of the certified operator. Otherwise, it serves little purpose to contract with a certified operator.

System Inspection Frequency

I. Water Supply System

Description	Inspection Frequency	
	One Operator	More Than One Operator
Distribution System Only	Twice per Month*	Monthly
Chlorination Only	Daily	Weekly
Treatment**	Daily	Daily

II. Wastewater Treatment Facility

Description	Inspection Frequency	
	One Operator	More Than One Operator
Non-discharging Pond	Twice per Month	Monthly
Lift Station	Weekly	Monthly
Discharging Pond	Weekly	Monthly
Treatment***	Daily	Weekly

* More often if additional sampling is required

** Includes iron and manganese removal; softening; coagulation, sedimentation, and filtration; recarbonation; and chemical addition (other than chlorine)

*** Biological treatment including trickling filter rotating biological contactors, and activated sludge

Operator Certification



Guidelines for Contract Operations of Small Water Supplies and Wastewater Treatment Facilities

**KDHE – Bureau of Water
Technical Services Section**
1000 SW Jackson Street, Suite 420
Topeka, KS 66612-1367
Phone: 785.296.5511