

# 2014 WATER SUCCESS STORY

## Bureau of Water Quality



### New rules improve and streamline programs

By Julia Riley, Wisconsin DNR

#### Wastewater Operator Certification Rule Revisions Improve Program

Wastewater treatment processes change in response to new technologies and revised pollutant reduction goals. The sophistication of some types of wastewater treatment plants requires highly-trained and experienced operators. On-going training is necessary for wastewater operators to stay current on technology improvements.

The DNR certifies wastewater treatment operators through the requirements set forth in Chapter NR 114, Wis. Adm. Code. A "certified operator" who meets the requirements of Chapter NR 114, is issued a certificate by the DNR to operate one or more of the classifications of wastewater treatment plants. Operators who obtain additional training and experience can then be certified to operate more subclasses of wastewater treatment processes.

A workgroup of representatives from the Wisconsin Wastewater Operators Association (WWOA), the Wisconsin Rural Water Association, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, private trainers, consultants, technical colleges and DNR staff was assembled in 2010 with the goal of improving the wastewater operator certification program. The workgroup recommendations led to revisions to Chapter NR 114 to allow operators more flexibility in obtaining advanced-level certifications for

new treatment technologies. The revised Chapter NR 114 was published on July 1, 2014. These revisions take effect on July 1, 2015, a year from the published date, to allow time for updating operator exams and study guides.



*Wastewater treatment operators often use supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) systems to remotely monitor, operate and fine-tune equipment and processes within the wastewater system infrastructure. DNR photo.*

The rule revised wastewater subclasses, created four new subclasses (including collection systems), and developed a point system for advanced wastewater certification. More information about the rule revisions is available on the Operator Certification website at: [dnr.wi.gov/regulations/opcert/](http://dnr.wi.gov/regulations/opcert/).

The rules were also updated to include obtaining advanced certification points by participating in a wastewater operator apprenticeship program. A Wisconsin Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Apprenticeship Program was developed in 2011 by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards (DWD-BAS) in partnership with

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the DNR. The two agencies solicited input from municipalities and the WWOA in developing the program.

The apprenticeship is a 3-year program that comprises approximately 5,568 hours of on-the-job learning and 432 hours of related instruction. Both the apprentice and their employer benefit from participation in the apprenticeship program. Apprentices gain valuable paid on-the-job experience and attend wastewater classes. Employers then gain a highly-skilled employee with on-the-job experience. For more detailed information on the apprenticeship program see (exit DNR):

[www.morainepark.edu/programs-and-courses/programs-of-study/Wastewater+Treatment+Plant+Operator+Apprenticeship/](http://www.morainepark.edu/programs-and-courses/programs-of-study/Wastewater+Treatment+Plant+Operator+Apprenticeship/) and <https://www.gtc.edu/programs/apprenticeship/waste-water-treatment-plant-operator>.

## Pretreatment Rules Streamlined

Rule revisions to Chapter NR 211 - General Pretreatment Requirements, Wis. Adm. Code, more closely align Wisconsin's pretreatment requirements with the federal regulations known as the Pretreatment Streamlining Rule. U.S. EPA requested that Wisconsin incorporate federal streamlining changes to reduce pretreatment requirements for regulated industries and delegated municipal treatment works without adversely affecting environmental protection. The revisions to Chapter NR 211 became effective February 1, 2014. The Chapter NR 211 rule revisions:

- ◇ Removed sampling requirements for wastewater pollutants, discharged by industries to sanitary sewers, shown to be neither present nor expected to be present in the discharge.



*Sampling equipment—some treatment sampling requirements were modified as part of the rule revisions. DNR photo.*

- ◇ Removed all pretreatment sampling and reporting requirements for industries never discharging more than 100 gallons per day (gpd) of regulated industrial wastewater to the sanitary sewer.
- ◇ Reduced pretreatment sampling, reporting and inspecting requirements for industries which discharge less than .01 percent of the wastewater flow capacity of the municipal treatment plant they discharge to.
- ◇ Required municipal wastewater treatment plants with industrial pretreatment programs to repeat sampling at industries if a test result from the municipal sample exceeded a limit.
- ◇ Allowed municipal wastewater treatment plants with industrial pretreatment programs to use a general discharge permit, rather than individual permits, to regulate several similar industries.
- ◇ Required municipal wastewater treatment plants with industrial pretreatment programs to include applicable Best Management Practices.

*Wastewater Pretreatment Coordinator, Bob Liska, finalized rule revision language and moved the rule package through the administrative rules approval process. Julia Riley is a Water Resources Management Specialist in the Bureau of Water Quality.*