



# The Certified Operator

*Operator Certification Program Information for Waterworks and Wastewater Operators.  
Published by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources*

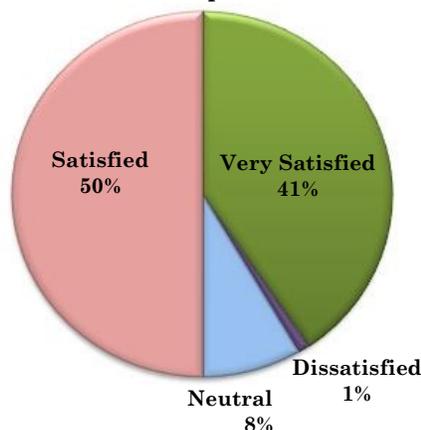
## A NOTE FROM THE OPERATOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM COORDINATOR

I hope everyone had a nice and enjoyable summer; I know I have been enjoying getting outside! At work, the Operator Certification Program has been busy implementing the revised Wisconsin Administrative Rule NR114 – Certification Requirements for Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators, which took effect on July 1, 2015. Implementation went well and all certified wastewater operators should have received a new certificate in the mail showing their new subclasses and grade levels. More information on the changes is available on pages 2 - 3.

This past year marked another milestone for the Operator Certification Program; it was the first full year of electronic tracking of credits. Operators who have renewed since October 1, 2014 (and have an email address on file) should have received a link via email to complete a survey regarding their satisfaction with the new electronic tracking of credits and renewal process. The Operator Certification Program highly appreciates the feedback given so far. Every comment is read and operators' collective comments influence program changes. So far, there have been over 400 responses from wastewater and municipal water-

works operators and an overwhelming satisfaction rate with the new process and the electronic enhancements. See the pie chart below for a breakdown of the overall satisfaction rate. The survey will continue for several more months so that we can obtain more feedback from those operators that renew this fall.

**Overall Satisfaction Rate - Electronic Improvements**



Speaking of electronic communication, if an operator received this newsletter via regular postal mail, then we either do not have a valid email address on file for them or they had requested to receive the newsletter by hard copy. Having an email address on file with the operator certification program is advantageous to operators for a number of reasons: 1) every time an operator's training history re-

port is updated, they receive an email notification; 2) operators receive email reminders on upcoming exam application deadlines; 3) very occasional other email notifications may be sent regarding any important updates to the program. To provide your email address to the DNR, send an email to [DNROpCert@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNROpCert@wisconsin.gov) with your first and last name, as well as your operator certification number.

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On the drinking water side of things, we have three newly designated regional operator certification contacts so that now there is one contact in every region. Regional coordinators are the first point of contact for operator certification questions and experience form submittal. See pages 4-5 for the coordinators' names and contact information.

As always, I am here to answer any questions you may have. I can be reached at 608-266-0498 or [Lisa.Bushby@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:Lisa.Bushby@Wisconsin.gov). I hope to see some of you at the operator conferences this year. Feel free to stop by the DNR booth!

*Lisa Bushby with a copy of the new NR 114* 



## NR114 Rule Revision Information for Wastewater Operators

### How to Obtain Advanced Level Certification – Wastewater Operators

As part of the NR114 Rule revision, a point system was established for advanced level certification to allow for more flexibility beyond just taking an exam. Now an operator can obtain points towards advanced level certification by completing advanced level coursework, completing the statewide approved apprenticeship program, or if they have an advanced level degree related to wastewater treatment. A total of 10 advanced points are needed in order to apply for advanced level certification. Hands-on experience is still a key component in advancing in certification levels. At least 4 of the points must be obtained through 4 years of hands-on experience. A maximum of 6 years of hands-on experience can be used towards points. Refer to the chart below for a breakdown of the point system.

Type	Point Method	Points	Minimum Hours
Experience	4 years hands-on	4	4,000
	5 years hands-on	5	5,000
	6 years hands-on	6	6,000
Degree	Undergrad or Graduate Degree	6	At least 240 hours wastewater related courses
	Water/Wastewater Associates Degree	6	N/A
Apprenticeship	Completion of State Approved Apprenticeship Program	6	N/A
Exam	100 Question Multiple Course Exam	4	N/A
Advanced Coursework	Pre-approved by the DNR and on list of approved courses	2	80
		1.5	60
		1	40
		0.5	20

A list of approved advanced level courses will be posted on the Operator Certification website by September 1<sup>st</sup>.

For questions on advanced level certification, please contact Danielle Luke, wastewater support specialist, at 608-266-9239 or [Danielle.Luke@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:Danielle.Luke@Wisconsin.gov)

## New Wastewater Operator Study Guides

Given the significant time and effort needed to revise study guides according to the new subclasses that became effective July 1, 2015 under Wisc. Adm. Code NR 114, study guides will be released and available in phases as given below. Only exams for which study guides are available will be given on the exam date.

Note that these dates are tentative.

### Available now

Basic General Wastewater

A1 - Biological Treatment - Suspended Growth Processes

A3 - Recirculating Media Filters

### Available by September 1, 2015 (for November 2015 exam date)

A4 - Ponds, Lagoons and Natural Systems

D - Disinfection

L - Laboratory

P - Nutrient Removal- Phosphorus

U - Unique Treatment Systems

General Advanced 100 Question Exam

### Available by February 1, 2016 (for May 2016 exam date)

A2 - Biological Treatment – Attached Growth Processes

B - Solids Separation

C - Biological Solids/Sludge- Handling, Processing and Reuse

### Available by February 1, 2017 (for May 2017 exam date)

N - Nutrient Removal – Nitrogen

A5 - Anaerobic Treatment of Liquid Waste

### Available by August 1, 2017 (for November 2017 exam date)

SS - Sanitary Sewer Collection System

For questions about the study guides and their availability, contact Jack Saltes, Wastewater Operations Engineer at [Jack.Saltes@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:Jack.Saltes@Wisconsin.gov) or 608-264-6045.

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## NEW COLLECTION SYSTEM CERTIFICATION

Under the revised Wisconsin Administrative Rule NR 114, owners of treatment works, which includes the treatment plant and sanitary sewer collection systems associated with it, shall have at least one operator certified in the new collection system subclass. For satellite sewerage collection systems, this certification is voluntary. However, the Department highly recommends that satellite systems have a certified operator in collection systems.

This new requirement was made in order to encourage the advancement of operator knowledge and competency in operating and rehabilitating this aging infrastructure. In addition, collection system certification will provide the necessary knowledge to develop and implement CMOM programs. To become certified, the person will need to take the 50 question multiple choice collection systems exam. The basic general wastewater exam is *not* required for collection

system certification.

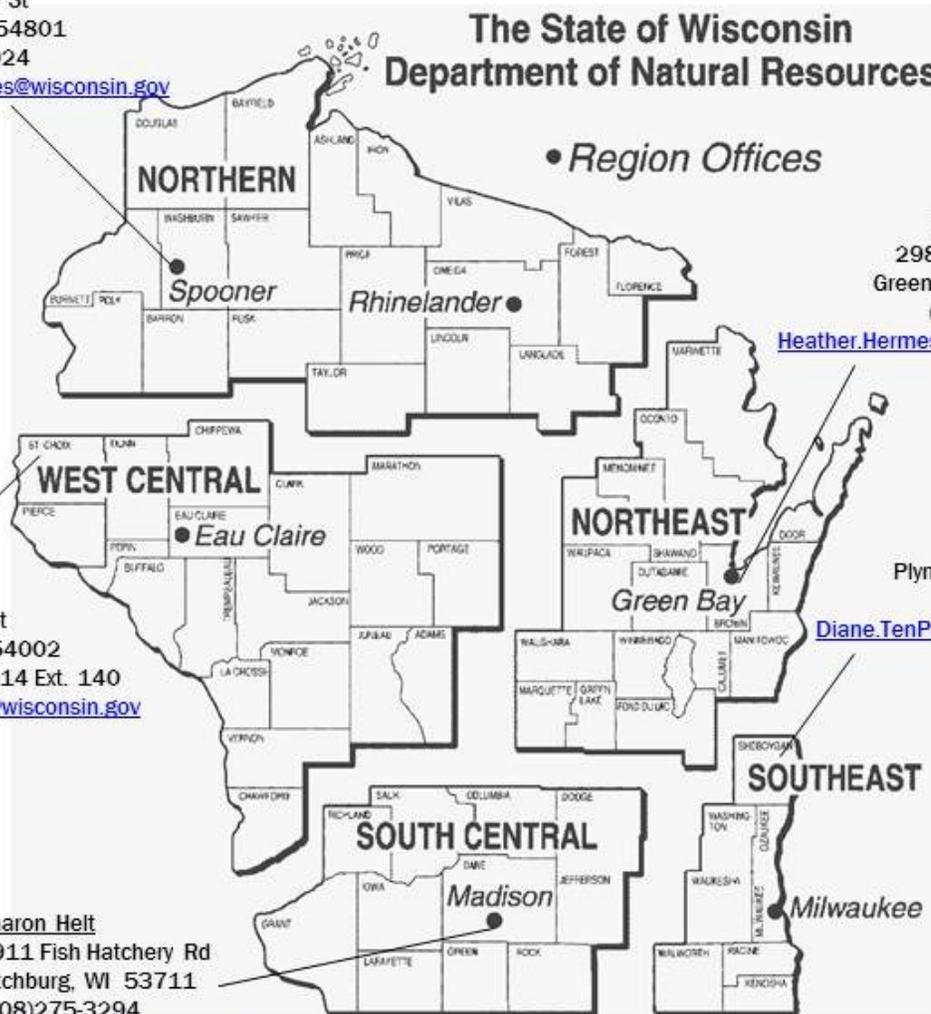
The collection system study guide and exam has not yet been developed and will tentatively be complete in 2017. Once the collection system study guide and exam have been developed by the department, and at the time of WPDES permit reissuance, collection system operators will have a permit term of 5 years to obtain collection system certification. Basic level certification is the only level required for all collection systems.

## REGIONAL COORDINATORS—WATERWORKS OPERATORS



### Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Waterworks Operator Certification Regional Coordinators

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[SarahE.Hughes@wisconsin.gov](mailto:SarahE.Hughes@wisconsin.gov)



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608-266-0498  
[Lisa.Bushby@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Lisa.Bushby@wisconsin.gov)

For general questions, e-mail the Operator Certification Mailbox at:  
[DNROpCert@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNROpCert@wisconsin.gov)

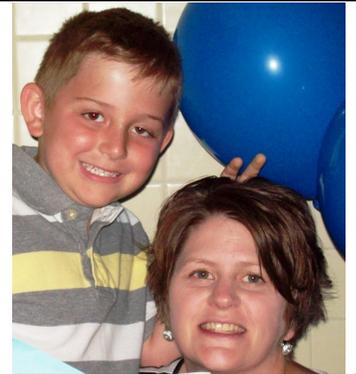
## SPOTLIGHT ON NEW STAFF

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*Hello, I'm Diane Ten Pas.* I am the **Regional Waterworks Operator Certification Coordinator for the Southeast Region (SER)**. I have been in the drinking water program as an environmental program associate in SER for more than 9 years, and I've been with the department for more than 11 years. I hold a B.S. Degree from UW-Stevens Point where my studies included chemistry, water science, & soil science. I'm generally the first contact in SER for unsafe bacti samples & for sample reporting errors. I am happy to be able to help system owners/operators troubleshoot problems that are encountered, so they can continue to provide safe drinking water for their customers.

*Hello, my name is Heather Hermes* and I have recently been added as the **North-east Regional Coordinator for Waterworks Operator Certification**. I have worked for the Department of Natural Resources for 14 years, and I have been with the Drinking Water & Groundwater Program since 2011 as an Environmental Program Associate. I work closely with Public Water Supply Engineers and Specialists implementing the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) regulations. I am usually the first point of contact when systems have unsafe bacteria samples and I help guide the systems in their return to compliance. Although I am fairly new to this position, please feel free to contact me and I will do my best to help you out.



*Hello everyone, my name is Sarah Hughes* and I'm the new **Regional Coordinator for Waterworks Operator Certifications in the Northern Region**. I've worked for the Department of Natural Resources, in the Spooner office, as a Program Associate for the Drinking and Groundwater Program, a little over a year now. You will normally hear from me if there happens to be an unsafe sample, or missing paperwork and sampling requirements. While I'm still learning myself, I look forward to being able to help you as well as learn more about the technical side of your jobs. Feel free to contact me anytime!

*Hello there, my name is Will Erikson* and I am a **Program Assistant** with the Operator Certification Program. I am stationed out of Madison's central offices. I hold a B.A. in Environmental Studies from Dickinson College with an emphasis on sustainability and water resources. My primary responsibilities include processing operator renewals, training attendance forms, exam applications and handling remittances. Interacting with wastewater, municipal waterworks and small water systems operators across the state has been very rewarding and I look forward to more interactions with operators in the future!



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## WASTEWATER CONTACTS

For wastewater questions in the northeast part of the state, please contact Dick Sachs: 2984 Shawano Ave, Green Bay, WI 54313-6727, (920) 662-5176, [Richard.Sachs@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:Richard.Sachs@Wisconsin.gov)

For all other parts of the state, please contact Lisa Bushby: PO Box 7921, Madison WI 53707-7921, (608) 266-0498, [Lisa.Bushby@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:Lisa.Bushby@Wisconsin.gov).

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## Revised Total Coliform Rule

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### THE MAXIMUM CONTAMINANT LEVEL FOR TOTAL COLIFORM BACTERIA WILL DISAPPEAR IN 2016

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The Total Coliform Rule, part of the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), has been revised. Effective April 1, 2016, the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) and associated public notice for total coliform bacteria will be eliminated. You probably have a few questions about that. Here is what you need to know.

#### Why is this happening?

SDWA rules are reviewed every six years by the EPA. The Total Coliform Rule has been in place since 1989. The federal Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) will become effective on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

#### Is water containing total coliform bacteria safe to drink?

Total coliform bacteria are not usually harmful in and of themselves. We sample for them as a way of indicating whether any fecal contamination or harmful viruses might also be present. The coliform tests are much cheaper and faster than sampling for disease causing organisms.

As more data have become available in the last couple of decades, scientists determined that total coliform bacteria are not as useful as *E. coli* in determining if any fecal contamination is present. However, total coliform bacteria are still a very good indication that a water system is compromised and has the potential for other harmful organisms to enter the water supply.

#### What does this mean for operators of municipal water systems in Wisconsin?

The elimination of the MCL for total coliform does not mean you're in the clear if you get coliform detections. The MCL is being replaced with a requirement to perform a Level 1 Assessment. Basically, the same things that currently trigger the total coliform MCL will trigger the Level 1 Assessment requirement in the future. A Level 1 Assessment is completed by operators of municipal systems. DNR has an assessment form available (see the link below). Some operators have tried out this form already. It is a fairly straightforward set of questions designed to help you determine the source of bacteria in your water system. You will have 30 days to complete the form and send it back to the DNR after a Level 1 trigger event.

Under the RTCR, exceeding the MCL for *E. coli* bacteria will trigger the requirement for a Level 2 Assessment. Level 2 Assessments will be conducted by DNR. This assessment is similar to a Level 1 Assessment but will include a more thorough inspection of the water system facilities to determine the source of *E. coli* and identify necessary corrective actions.

The link below will take you to a fact sheet with options for responding to total coliform or *E. coli* detects at municipal systems between now and April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. It also contains the Level 1 Assessment form. You have the option to use the form now, and will be required to use it after April 1, 2016.

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/DrinkingWater/documents/MC-TC-ECresponseL1form.pdf>

#### Does the RTCR apply to other types of water systems too?

Yes. The rule applies to all public water systems in the country. Other-than-municipal (OTM) systems have the same requirements as municipal systems. There are some additional requirements for non-community systems that operate seasonally and for any system on reduced monitoring frequencies. OTMs will no longer be offered reduced monitoring schedules for total coliform bacteria.

For more information, please contact Adam DeWeese at 608-264-9229 or [Adam.DeWeese@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Adam.DeWeese@wisconsin.gov)

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## ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

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**Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC)**, Green Bay Campus, Green Bay WI  
*Environmental Engineering Waste and Water Technology*

**Gateway Technical College**, Sturtevant, WI  
*Civil Engineering Technology - Fresh Water Resources*

**Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC)**, Mequon Campus, Mequon WI  
*Environmental Health and Water Quality Technology A.A.S. Degree*

**Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC)**, Fond du Lac, WI  
*Water Quality Technology A.A.S. Degree, Online Only*

**Bay College**, Escanaba Campus, Escanaba MI  
*Water Resource Management A.A.S. Degree*

**Lewis and Clark Community College**, Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville Environmental Resource Training Center, Edwardsville IL  
*Environmental Treatment Technologies—Water Treatment A.A.S. Degree*

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## ONLINE AND CORRESPONDENCE TRAINING

Need continuing education credits last minute? Don't want to travel to attend a training event? Online or correspondence courses may be a good option for you. Visit the Operator Certification training website to find a list of providers and for more information.

<http://dnr.wi.gov/regulations/opcert/training.html>

### Other Links of Interest

**SmallWaterSupply.org** is a free service to support water and wastewater operators with comprehensive resources and information in one easy-to-use place. The website contains a searchable document library, a forum, and a blog. You may also sign up for their weekly newsletter.

<http://smallwatersupply.org/>

**Wisconsin's Water Library** offers technical wastewater and waterworks manuals available via inter-library loan, including the Sacramento Manuals:

<http://aqua.wisc.edu/Waterlibrary/>



### **Waterworks Study Materials Available for Loan at Wisconsin's Water Library!**

California State University Sacramento, Field Study Training Program Guides:

- *Water Distribution System Operation and Maintenance*, 6th Edition
- *Water Treatment Plant Operation*, Vol. I & II 6th Edition
- *Small Water System Operation and Maintenance*, 5th Edition

American Water Works Association Training Handbooks:

- *Water treatment operator training handbook*
- *Water distribution operator training handbook*

Visit <http://aqua.wisc.edu/waterlibrary/> to learn more.

**For an up-to-date calendar of training events, please visit our online training calendar:**

<http://dnr.wi.gov/regulations/opcert/training.html>

**Free Training CDs**

The DNR Operator Certification Program has a limited number of Montana Water Center CDs available. The CDs contain courses that an operator can complete to obtain continuing education credits. Note that an operator may only take each Montana Water Center course once for credits. The following CDs are available:

<b>CD Title</b>	<b>Courses</b>	<b>Certification Type</b>	<b>CECs</b>
<b>Operator Basics Training Series</b>	<b>Groundwater</b>	<b>Municipal Waterworks</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>Surface Water &amp; Groundwater Combined</b>	<b>Municipal Waterworks</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>Wastewater Lagoons</b>	<b>Wastewater</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Contamination Explorer</b>	<b>Contamination Explorer</b>	<b>Municipal Waterworks</b>	<b>2.5</b>

**The CDs are available free of charge** while supplies last. To request a CD to be mailed to you, send an email to [DNROpCert@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNROpCert@Wisconsin.gov) with "Montana Water Center CD Request" in the subject line. State your mailing address in the email and which CD or CDs you would like mailed to you.

At course completion, you will be able to print a certificate of completion as proof of attendance. You may mail in that certificate at the time of your certification renewal, or if you would like the course credited to your electronic training history report ahead of time, complete the Operator Training Report Form available on the forms webpage — <http://dnr.wi.gov/regulations/opcert/forms.html>

## Wastewater Operator Apprenticeship Program

Are you, or your employee, new to wastewater treatment and looking for a way to further your knowledge on this field? Want to take wastewater classes while will earning an income and on-the-job experience?

Contact the Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards at:

Website: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/>  
Phone: (608) 266-3332



Wisconsin's Sector Alliance for the Green Economy

## DNR OFFERS LAB EXAM REVIEW COURSE

The DNR will be offering a Basic Lab Exam Review course this October. This course is designed to help operators prepare for the Basic Lab exam. Course content is based on the DNR study guide, with input from the experienced instructors. Date/location yet to be determined. Check the operator certification training calendar in September for registration information.



*Rick Mealy (L) and George Bowman (R), Wisconsin DNR, are co-instructors for the course.*

## Operator Certification Website:

Our website is:  
<http://dnr.wi.gov/regulations/opcert>

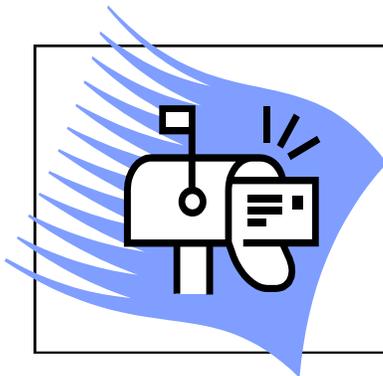
-OR-

You may start at the DNR homepage  
<http://dnr.wi.gov> and search keywords  
"Operator Certification"

## Veterans Fee Waiver Program

Veterans may apply for a one-time fee waiver to be used towards exam fees.  
Visit the Operator Certification Forms & Applications Webpage for more information.





**Employment or Address Changes Reminder:**

If you change employment, ask your facility to notify your DNR representative of any personnel changes. Contact your regional coordinator (*see pages 4-5*) if you have a change in mailing or email address. Current contact information helps get important updates and reminders to you in a timely manner.



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U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Madison, WI  
Permit No. 906

Wisconsin DNR  
Operator Certification Program  
PO Box 7921  
Madison, WI 53707-7921

**This newsletter is available electronically.**

*The Certified Operator* was e-mailed to all operators with email addresses on file. If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please provide your name, certification number, and email address to [DNROpCert@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNROpCert@Wisconsin.gov)

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## UPCOMING EXAM DATES

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**Wednesday, November 4th - Deadline to apply October 7, 2015**

**Wednesday, May 4th - Deadline to apply April 6, 2016**

Exam applications are mailed to operators who have taken an exam in the last year and a half. Exam applications are available on our website.

<http://dnr.wi.gov/> Keyword Search: "Operator Certification"

## CONGRATULATIONS

At the May 6th, 2015 exams, 105 *new* municipal waterworks and 123 *new* wastewater operators became certified. Congratulations to all the new certified operators and to operators that added a new subclass to their certification!

**This newsletter is sent to all active certified operators that we have on file.**