



Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

Application Instructions and Qualifications for Wastewater System Operator Certification

Please make sure you use the **most current** application and application instructions from our webpage. Carefully read the application and answer all questions. *Your application must include proof of qualification for certificate requirements with education and experience.* ([Refer to Oregon Administrative Rules Chapter 340, Division 049](#)).

Required Education Documents: If not previously submitted to DEQ, provide a copy of your high school diploma, GED certificate, or equivalent. In some instances a sufficient number of college credits may be approved to substitute for the absence of a HS education document, but not both.

Post-High School (PHS) Education Documents: If you are claiming post-high school education and training to reduce the experience requirement, provide a copy of your degree, transcript(s), or course completion documentation. Less than 45 CEUs will not be considered for post-HS education unless when combined with qualifying college credit hours the total exceeds 45 (45 quarter or 30 semester) credits. The Department will consider the direct relevance of post-HS education to wastewater required knowledge: e.g. applied sciences, math, engineering, operations, etc. toward certification qualifications.

Certification Exams: Computer-based certification exams are available year-round, Monday through Friday, including Saturday, at some testing sites. Oregon testing locations include Baker City, Bandon, Bend, Eugene, Klamath Falls, Medford, Portland, Salem. There are also several locations in Washington and Idaho, as well as most other states. For the most current list, visit: <https://online.goamp.com/CandidateHome/candidateInformation.aspx>

Application Processing:

Applicants will receive an exam eligibility notification **email** at least 30 days from the application receipt date. Please contact our office if you have not received a notice by 6 weeks from the mailing date. An email address for eligibility notification and follow-up communication is required. DEQ may return or deny late or incomplete applications. Application review fees are non-refundable.

Certificate Exam Qualifications: In addition to passing an exam, applicants must meet experience requirements (see page 3). However, Grade I applicants (candidates) may test prior to meeting the 12-month work experience requirement if they are enrolled in, or have completed, DEQ-approved training. These Grade I candidates are granted a testing waiver and are given 36 months to meet the experience requirement. Grade II, III and IV candidates may be granted experience or education waivers to test early. These waivers are limited to four months following the month of the test. Failure to qualify for a certificate in the time allotted disqualifies a passing test result. A [post-exam application](#) and a \$50 fee is required in order to demonstrate the experience requirement is met.

Operator in Training (OIT): An applicant that does not meet the 12 month grade I certificate experience requirement, but is otherwise qualified by education and is participating in or has completed a [DEQ-approved training program](#), may take a Grade I Treatment or Collection examination. Upon passing the exam, the applicant is recognized as an Operator-In-Training for 36 months. During the 36-month period, the applicant must meet the experience requirements for the standard Grade I or Provisional certificate.

Provisional Grade I Certificate: A Provisional Grade I certificate application can be submitted at any time. This 12-month non-renewable certificate enables an applicant to get on-the-job experience. To qualify for a Provisional Grade I certificate, you must have a high school diploma or GED, and be engaged in a DEQ-approved operator training program supervised by a certified operator. *Passing the Grade I exam is not required. to be provisionally certified.* The Provisional applicant will automatically be signed up to take the Grade I exam and will have one year to take the test once approved. The Grade I exam fee is included in the Provisional exam fee.

Grade I-IV Certificates: Applicants must meet the required education and experience as well as pass the computer-based ABC national standardized examination to be certified. Tests are closed book, include “need to know” subject areas, and consist of 100 multiple-choice questions. A passing score is 70% or higher.

Small Wastewater Systems Certificate (SWWS): DEQ may issue a Small Wastewater System certificate to an applicant who meets the education and experience requirements and has passed the Small Wastewater System certification exam.

Certificate by Reciprocity: Applications for reciprocity certification can be submitted at any time. DEQ will consider a valid certificate in good standing and have met Oregon equivalent education, experience, and exam requirements per Oregon exam deadlines. DEQ will only consider reciprocity applications at the same grade as the certificate held in the other state when the exam in the other state was an ABC standardized exam. DEQ will consider non-ABC exam certificates at one grade lower for reciprocity. Please select the certification grade accordingly. Applicants must also meet Oregon’s requirements for experience and education for the grade they seek.

Application forms, rules, and test information are available online at: www.deq.state.or.us/wq/opcert/opcert.htm. Call email us at opcert@deq.state.or.us , or call us at 1-800-452-4011 or 503-229-5349 for further questions.

******* How To Use Qualifications Tables below *******

Education (Ed/PHS Ed):

- High School (HS) diploma, a GED certificate, or equivalent, document is required.
- **PHS Ed**= Post-High School in years: One year of post-high school education equals 45 qualifying Continuing Education Units (CEUs) or equivalent, or 45 quarter or 30 semester hours of qualifying college or university credit. (HS + 1 = High School + 1 year of PHS Ed).
- Qualifying CEUs or college credits must be relevant to operator job tasks and required knowledge, and may be combined.
- Credits for on-the-job training may be used to meet education or experience, but not both.

Experience (Exp):

- Year(s) of experience in the routine performance of operator duties, tasks, and responsibilities at a domestic wastewater collection or treatment system (may include operator intern or trainee if not also CWE). DEQ may give partial credit for experience in a related field, as allowed by rule.
- Grade I: the Associate of Applied Science degree in water quality / wastewater technology may substitute for 6 months experience; confirm in advance.
- Grades III and IV: a minimum amount of System Class operator experience is required.

System Class:

The system classification where the experience was earned. The permit contains this classification, or if no permit, the collection-only wastewater system must have the equivalent number of population or connections. At least half of the total experience must be no more than one grade lower than the certificate grade desired.

Paths A-E:

Applicants may qualify for certification through different paths of experience and education.

TABLE 1: COLLECTION SYSTEM Operator Qualifications

Certificate Level	Path A			Path B			Path C			Path D			Path E		
	Ed	Exp (years)	System Class	PHS Ed	Exp (y)	System Class	PHS Ed	Exp (y)	System Class	PHS Ed	Exp (y)	System Class	PHS Ed	Exp (y)	System Class
SWWS	HS	1	any												
Grade I	HS	1	any												
Provisional I	HS	any	any												
Grade II	HS	3	any	1	2	any									
Grade III	HS	8	4 ≥ II	1	5	2.5 ≥ II	2	4	2 ≥ II	3	3	1.5 ≥ II			
Grade IV	HS	10	5 ≥ III	1	8	4 ≥ III	2	6	3 ≥ III	3	5	2.5 ≥ III	4	4	2 ≥ III

TABLE 2: TREATMENT SYSTEM Operator Qualifications

Certificate Level and Qualifications	Path A			Path B			Path C			Path D		
	Ed	Exp (years)	System Class	PHS Ed	Exp (y)	System Class	PHS Ed	Exp (y)	System Class	PHS Ed	Exp (y)	System Class
SWWS	HS	1	any									
Grade I	HS	1	any									
Provisional I	HS	any	any									
Grade II	HS	3	any	1	2	any						
Grade III	HS	8	4 ≥ II	1	5	2.5 ≥ II	2	4	2 ≥ II	3	3	1.5 ≥ II
Grade IV	HS+1	10	5 ≥ III	2	6	3 ≥ III	3	5	2.5 ≥ III	4	4	2 ≥ III