

Pathways to entry level Operator Certification for your community



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

Water Quality Program Northwest Region

700 NE Multnomah St, Ste
#600
Portland, OR 97232-4100

Phone: 800-452-4011
Fax: 503-229-6957
Contact: Paula Carson
Phone: 503-229-5161
carson.paula@deq.state.or.us

DEQ knows that Oregon communities have challenges finding certified operators for their wastewater treatment and collection systems. This factsheet describes three different pathways to entry level certification and clarifies the requirements on experience and education needed in order to take the certification exam.

Path 1: Operator in Training

This path is for applicants who do not meet the experience requirement for a Grade I certificate, but are otherwise qualified because they meet the education requirement and have completed a DEQ-approved training program. These applicants can take a Grade I Treatment or Collection examination and upon passing the exam, they are recognized as an Operator-in-Training for 36 months. During the 36-month period, applicants should gain the necessary experience to submit a Post Exam Supplemental Application Form to receive their Grade I certificate.

Path 2: Provisional Grade I Certificate

Qualified applicants can submit a Provisional Grade I certificate application at any time. This 12-month non-renewable certificate enables applicants to get on-the-job experience. To qualify for a Provisional Grade I certificate, applicants must have a high school diploma or GED; be engaged in a DEQ-approved operator training program; and be supervised by a certified operator while on the job.

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. Once an applicant passes the test and completes one year of experience, DEQ will issue the Grade I certificate.

Path 3: Small Wastewater Systems Certificate

DEQ may issue a Small Wastewater System Operator certificate to an applicant who meets the education and experience requirements and has passed the Small Wastewater System certification exam. A Small Wastewater System is defined as a system designed for populations

of less than 500, or with fewer than 150 connections. Systems that meet this definition can be considered for reclassification by contacting their DEQ permit compliance person.

Experience qualification

DEQ evaluates applicants based on acceptable operating experience. Experience is evaluated on a case by case basis, using the following guidelines:

For the Grade I certificate

- One year of part time or full time experience in routine performance of operator duties, tasks and responsibilities at a domestic wastewater collection or treatment system. Intern or volunteer experience may count as education or experience, but not both. .
- Associate of Applied Science degree in water quality technology, or equivalent approved field, may substitute for 6 months of experience.
- Partial credit for experience in a related field, as allowed by rule.

For Grades II-IV certificate requirements, visit the operator certification program website. <http://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/wqpermits/Pages/Wastewater-Operator-Certification.aspx>

Alternative formats

Documents can be provided upon request in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request a document in another format or language, call DEQ in Portland at 503-229-5696, or toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696; or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.