



Fact Sheet

Wastewater Operator Certification – New 2025 Exam

Oregon law requires that trained and certified operators manage wastewater collection and treatment systems. This ensures the systems are operated in a way that protects public health and the environment. To become certified, prospective operators must pass an Oregon Department of Environmental Quality-approved exam.

New exams offered on May 1, 2025

Water Professional International, formerly known as the Association of Boards of Certification, develops standardized exams through a rigorous psychometric process and thorough job analysis. DEQ has administered the Association of Boards of Certification 2019 standardized exam since Jan. 1, 2022.

As with the 2019 exams, in addition to the 100 scored items included on each 2025 exam, 10 unscored pre-test questions are administered to candidates. While pre-test questions will not impact candidates' scores, they are an important part of the standardized exam program because they allow psychometricians and subject matter experts to gather the statistical data needed to evaluate a potential item's performance and suitability for future exams.

Need-to-Know Criteria

The WPI 2025 standardized exams align with the newly published WPI Need-to-Know criteria, or NTK. Each NTK document is based on an individual exam, rather than aggregating Class I-IV information in a single document. The NTK is an essential roadmap to what is included in WPI's standardized exams and can help operators prepare for success by including the following information:

- Clearly stated and streamlined job task statements.
- Primary and Secondary reference material for each content area.

Reporting

Programs implementing the 2025 standardized exams will continue to provide score reports to test takers. These reports are mapped to the NTK and offer diagnostic information about candidate performance on specific examination content areas. Candidates can use their score reports to determine where to focus future preparation efforts and consult the NTK for a complete list of testable operator job tasks in that content area.

Translation or other formats

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800-452-4011 | TTY: 711 | deqinfo@deq.oregon.gov

2025 Exam scoring updates

Scores will be reported as a scaled score. A scaled score is a conversion of a candidate's raw score on an exam to a common scale. The purpose of a scaled score is to ensure a standard way of reporting exam outcomes and allows our psychometricians to be truer to the standard setting process. The water and wastewater industry has long dictated a 70% passing score is the threshold of minimum competence. The standard setting process detailed above does not always align with that 70% threshold.

For example, the standard setting process may indicate that the passing score for a Grade IV examination is 67, as opposed to 70. Alternatively, the process may also define that the passing score for a Grade I examination is 72. In a scaled scoring model, both of those cut scores would be normalized and reported on a scale of 70.

The points below detail the competence standard:

- A score of 100 scaled score units represents a perfect score with all questions answered correctly.
- A score of one scaled score unit represents the lowest score possible and signifies only a small number of questions were answered correctly.
- Candidates must receive a score of 70 scaled score units or higher to pass the exam which represents the minimum standard of knowledge.

This scoring methodology is commonplace in the testing industry and is used in many applications such as the ACT and SAT as well as most vocational examinations.

Submitting applications

Applications for examination must be submitted through Your DEQ Online. More information, including how to set up a YDO account and submit an application, is [available on our website](#).

Contacts

If you have any questions, please reach out to:

- **Paula Carson**, 503-229-5161, paula.carson@deq.oregon.gov
- **Kimi Grzyb**, 503-229-5349, kimi.grzyb@deq.oregon.gov

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