



Qualification Pathway Tables for Oregon Wastewater Operator Certification

Rules effective Jan. 1, 2025

Pathway tables

Go to page 3 of this document for the Collection and Treatment Wastewater Operator Certificate pathway qualifications tables. Choose the correct table for the certificate you seek. See Oregon Administrative Rule [340-049](#) for full details.

Definitions and abbreviations

Education

Education is noted by the abbreviation **Ed**. Paths A through E vary with post high-school education earned.

- **HS:** valid high school diploma, transcript, GED certificate, or equivalent; documentation is required.
- **Qual. PHS Ed, (years):** Qualifying post-high school education in years, (1-5y).
 - One year of PHS education equals 45 qualifying Continuing Education Units or equivalent, or 45 college/university quarter or 30 semester credits in qualifying topics.
 - HS + 1 = high school plus one year of PHS Ed. Qualifying college degrees or credits must be in the applied or technical sciences. Applied or technical sciences means science, mathematics, engineering, operation, maintenance and management, chemistry, water/wastewater technology, physical, or biological academic fields, per OAR 340-049-0030(4).
 - Qualifying CEUs must be DEQ-approved and relevant to operator job tasks and required knowledge and may be combined with qualifying college credits. DEQ may consider experience or educational credits, but not both, in qualifying an applicant where PHS education credits are earned for on-the-job training.

Proper complete documentation, including transcripts, is required for all claims of education.

Note: Treatment Grade IV, Path A requires a minimum of one year (45 CEUs and/or qualifying college credits) of **post-high school education**, see table on page 3.

Experience

Do not apply early. If you apply with less than the minimum experience requirement, even if only one month less, DEQ will consider this applying early and may approve you for a different designation with other requirements.

- **Exp. (y):** the minimum years of experience required in the routine performance of operator duties, tasks, and responsibilities, at a domestic wastewater collection or treatment system. This may include operator intern or trainee if not also CWE. DEQ may give up to 50% credit, for experience in a related field, as allowed by rule.
- **Six months experience option for Path A and Path E: for Small Wastewater System, or SWWS, and Grade I:**
 - Path A: Six months experience where your post high-school education is an approved Associate of Applied Science degree in water quality or wastewater technology (may substitute for six months of the one-year requirement); confirm in advance.
 - Path E: Six months experience where your post-high school education is an approved four-year college degree in a science or technical science field (may substitute for six months of the one-year requirement); confirm in advance.

Translation or other formats

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System class

The “system classification” of the system(s) where you earned your experience, per OAR 340-049-0020 and -0025 criteria. Grades III and IV also have minimum years of direct operator experience required. At least half the experience must be in a system classified at no more than one classification level lower than the desired certificate grade, depending on the applicable path. (For example, **4y≤III** means at least 4 years direct work experience at a system classified at Class III or higher).

SWWS (Small Wastewater System operator) certificate

The SWWS certificate is a single certificate with a single examination, for SWWS operation. One year of acceptable operating experience at any class system qualifies. A SWWS is a classification category of a small combination collection and treatment system, as designated in the wastewater permit document.

Operator-in-training (OIT)

Operator-in-training, or OIT, experience waiver option for applicants to take the exam with less than six months (Path A or Path E depending on AAS or BS degree) or less than one year (Path A). A “post-examination” application is required upon completion of exam, education, and experience. See [DEQ’s Wastewater Operator Certification web page](#) under “DEQ-approved training” for the accepted required course(s).

Provisional certificates under Path A

DEQ will issue, to the approved applicants, the temporary Provisional Grade I collection and/or treatment certificate(s) with less than one year of experience. Approval for the exam(s) is included. Provisional certificates are non-renewable and issued for one year. Post-exam application is required upon completion of exam, education, and experience. Application for provisional certification requires completion of high school, or GED, and these three conditions:

- Currently gaining operating experience at a wastewater system.
- Enrollment in or completion of the corresponding OIT DEQ-approved training, with attached documentation. See DEQ’s certification webpage under “DEQ-approved training” for the accepted required course(s).
- Being trained and supervised, part-time or full-time, by a properly certified operator who completes the provisional affidavit form.

Fees

Application fees are available on DEQ’s [certification web page](#) and are **non-refundable** per OAR 340-049-0060(4).

Contact

For questions, please contact the Wastewater Operator Certification Program by email at opcert@deq.oregon.gov or by phone at 503-229-5349, or 203-229-5161.

Non-discrimination statement

DEQ does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status in the administration of its programs and activities. Visit DEQ’s [Civil Rights and Environmental Justice page](#).

Table 1. COLLECTION System Operator Path Qualifications

Certificate	Path A			Path B			Path C			Path D			Path E		
	Ed	Exp. (y)	System Class	Qual. PHS Ed	Exp. (y)	System Class	Qual. PHS Ed	Exp. (y)	System Class	Qual. PHS Ed	Exp. (y)	System Class	Qual. PHS Ed	Exp. (y)	System Class
SWWS	AAS/HS	6/12 mos	SWWS-IV										4	6 mos	SWWS-IV
Grade I	AAS/HS	6/12 mos	I-IV										4	6 mos	I-IV
Provisional I	HS	any	SWWS-IV												
Grade II	HS	3	I-IV	1	2	I-IV							4	1	I-IV
Grade III	HS	6	3y ≥ II	1	5	2.5y ≥ II	2	4	2y ≥ II	3	3	1.5y ≥ II	4	2	1y ≥ II
Grade IV	HS	8	4y ≥ III	1	7	3.5y ≥ III	2	6	3y ≥ III	3	5	2.5y ≥ III	4	4	2y ≥ III

Table 2. TREATMENT System Operator Path Qualifications

Certificate	Path A			Path B			Path C			Path D			Path E		
	Ed	Exp. (y)	System Class	Qual. PHS Ed	Exp. (y)	System Class	Qual. PHS Ed	Exp. (y)	System Class	Qual. PHS Ed	Exp. (y)	System Class	Qual. PHS Ed	Exp. (y)	System Class
SWWS	AAS/HS	6/12 mos	SWWS-IV										4	6 mos	SWWS-IV
Grade I	AAS/HS	6/12 mos	I-IV										4	6 mos	I-IV
Provisional I	HS	any	SWWS-IV												
Grade II	HS	3	I-IV	1	2	I-IV							4	1	I-IV
Grade III	HS	6	3y ≥ II	1	5	2.5y ≥ II	2	4	2y ≥ II	3	3	1.5y ≥ II	4	2	1y ≥ II
Grade IV	HS + 1	8	4y ≥ III	2	6	3y ≥ III	3	5	2.5y ≥ III	4	4	2y ≥ III	MS/PhD	3	1.5y ≥ III