

Minutes
COMMITTEE OF CERTIFICATION
December 8, 2022, 1:30 PM
Louisiana Department of Health
Bienville Building – Room 173
628 N 4th St
Baton Rouge, LA 70810

1.) ROLL CALL

A. Determination of Quorum.

Committee Members in attendance: Camille Mize – Chairman, Ronald Turner, Patrick Edmond, Sidney Bazley, Amanda Ames

Committee Members Absent: Joanne Massony, Verne Breland, Brandon Snead

A quorum was achieved.

Recognition of Visitors and Others:

LDH personnel in attendance: Esteban Gonzalez, Reyna Anderson Duffus, Colby McGruder, Sheree Taillon, Melissa Blake

2.) MINUTES

The minutes from the July 19, 2022 meeting was presented. Motion by Ronald Turner, Second by Amanda Ames to approve meeting minutes as presented. Motion was approved.

3.) CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

No Chairman's Report.

4.) ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

New software for Operator Certification, will be able to publish updated hours obtained on website once new software received.

Newsletter/listserv will be coming out for Operator Certification in Q1 of 2023 calendar year.

Brand new exams will be published, currently reviewing and planning instructor classes.

Expired appointments from LA Conference as well as vacancies, will investigate what to do regarding LA Conference appointees since LA Conference has not been active for quite some time.

5.) TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

Had scheduled 5 exams. 2 open and 3 closed. 5 were completed. . On average about 70% of operators show up to scheduled exams. This is 30% of applications that are reviewed and packets that are created that are not used.

Handed out exam reports for 2022 exams listing how many students took each exam, locations and if the exams were open or closed.

Trouble with onsite credit card payments from July-October, resolved for November exam.

Currently working on hours input to finalize K-Z cycle.

6.) SECRETARY'S REPORT

Preliminary water grades for systems will be published by January 1, Final grades will be published in May. Includes whether or not system has properly certified operator as well as other violations and deficiencies.

Funding for water and sewer projects through water sector should come out next month.

Have not received RLF funds yet and have yet to apply for the lead service line portion of bill money. Working with utilities to determine how much funds should be applied for.

7.) ASSOCIATION REPORTS

Louisiana Conference – No report

LRWA – No report

LWEA – No report

8.) OLD BUSINESS

Operator Complaint Falsifying records – Administrative Hearing

Unable to get complainant down for meeting and do not have enough for quorum on a vote for Mr. Hughes since Ms. Mize will recuse herself and there are not 5 remaining votes on committee remaining, will conduct hearing on next meeting.

9.) NEW BUSINESS

Reciprocity Requests

Olin Knox – has Alabama grade 4 WWT equivalent to LA WWT4, does not have education to qualify, will recommend WWT2

Hayden Pocock – has Texas WD - C and WWC2. Recommend WD2 and WWC2

Terrell Broussard – has Texas Groundwater Class C. Recommend WP2

Brian Vance – has Mississippi Water A, equivalent to class 4, does not have education to qualify for our class 4. Recommend WT2 and WP2

Amanda Ames requested experience for Mr. Knox and Mr. Vance and asked if approved at a level 2 would they then have to test for higher once they received education. Advised that if they obtain education they can reapply for reciprocity.

Ms. Ames asked how long it's been since these reciprocities have been requested. Advised that Mr. Broussard requested in July, Mr. Pocock in October, Mr. Knox this month.

Ms. Ames requested an alternate way of approval in order to avoid operators waiting several months in order to obtain a license. Suggested to allow Administrator to approve temporary license as soon as request is received and to then get it fully approved at Committee meeting.

Motion to allow new method of issuing reciprocity licenses made by Ms. Ames, 2nd by Turner.

Motion to approve previously mentioned reciprocity licenses by Ms. Mize, 2nd by Mr. Turner.

2023 Exam Schedule presented by Administrator. 3 Open exams, 6 Closed. Exams placed around the state.

Motion to approve scheduled made by Ms. Mize, 2nd by Mr. Turner

Operator Certification Rule General overview of presented by Administrator.

Ms. Ames requested we discuss section by section. Also advised to review the statute so we can determine whether committee has to vote on rule or approve rule prior to submitting rule change through department and ultimately receive legislative approval.

Definition of Complex Treatment was discussed as previously difficult to determine who needed a Water Treatment license.

Defining Professional Operator was discussed in order to better determine definition of requirements for operators who are listed as designated operator.

Reorganized rule to make more sense when reading and referencing other sections of rule.

Contract operators required by state health officer. Removed other instances where it referred to determination by committee of certification and changed to state health officer. This is in order to be able to more quickly make public health decisions rather than have to wait until committee meeting to address.

Administrator advised regarding LDH reviewing contracts that contract operators make with systems they work for. Ms. Ames advised to review with other states and need to get a better idea of what other states are specifically looking for in their contracts before we can consider adding that to our rule.

Discussion regarding 7313 adding RS language to rule in order to remove circular references.

Discussion regarding 7314 regarding employment requirement in order to become a certified operator. Chicken or egg situation that creates barrier to employment and license. Ultimately the certification belongs to the operator. Need to maintain reporting requirement for employment termination in order to continue to collect that data and submit to regions.

Administrator will review in order to find reasoning behind employment requirement.

Discussion regarding 7321 open exam 'shall' be conducted after LRWA conference, and LA conference short course. Need to replace shall with may.

Discussion regarding 7323 Examinations. Change payment method to fees being collected beforehand in order to stop taking cash on site and to avoid prepping packets and reviewing exams applications for operators that do not show up to test. Nonrefundable costs may pose an issue. Need to investigate a mechanism or language where, if proper reason exists, we can move the application to another test date instead of losing money. Also remove supervisor signatures from exam application. Certificate belongs to the operator, too many barriers placed on operator when supervisor signature is required.

Discussion regarding categorization of licenses. Other states use treatment process in order to determine licensures, Louisiana uses population. There are benefits to changing this as it could lead to better like for like determinations when looking for a new job or hiring a licensed operators but also presents complications in rewriting codes and exams to meet treatment type instead of population.

Discussed \$5 cost per exam. If CPI is used our cost per exam would be closer to \$35. Discussed other states that charge a flat fee such as Alabama \$325 which includes ABC exams. Florida charges \$100 per exam but \$60 of that fee goes to ABC for exam and proctoring and state keeps

\$40. Committee members want more information from these states to see if we can figure out what they base the cost of their exams on. Also would like to see the pass rates for these other states to see if there is a correlation with cost of exam and pass rate. Also need to determine how much it cost Louisiana to procter every exam and how to determine a breakeven. Decided to conduct further research to determine cost and other questions posed within the new rule and will follow in future meetings with findings.

10.) COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC

None

11.) NEXT MEETING DATE

February 16, 2023 in Baton Rouge, La – LDH Bienville Building.

12.) ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Camille Mize to adjourn, Second by Ronald Turner. Motion was approved.