

Minutes
COMMITTEE OF CERTIFICATION
July 18, 2023
3:30 PM
Lake Charles Civic Center
Lake Charles, LA 70601

1.) ROLL CALL

A. Determination of Quorum.

Committee Members in attendance: Patrick Edmond, Camille Mize, Ronald Turner, Sidney Bazley, Brandon Snead.

Committee Members: Joanne Massony

A quorum was achieved.

LDH personnel in attendance: Jeremy Harris, Vijai Elango, Colby McGruder, Reyna Duffus and Esteban Gonzalez.

B. Announcements: There were no announcements.

2.) MINUTES

The minutes from the December 6, 2022 meeting was presented. Motion was made to approve minutes. Motion was approved.

3.) CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

No Report

4.) ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Exam schedule was updated for March exam from March 21st to March 17th. Two appointees for LMA have sent to be approved. Those with expired appointments are still appointed to their position until they are replaced. Administrator spoke to Doil Nelson and he is collaborating with Hubert Franklin and Darren Johnson to see if there is something that can be done about reviving the LA Conference.

Capital Region has dissolved. South Central Region may be in the process of dissolving as well due to not having the safety net of the LA Conference.

New OP Cert software should be in by the end of the month and group will be running renewal cycle. Renewals will be sent by mail and will be posted on the website.

New exams have been pushed back in order to make better exams. Completing job analysis in order to tailor question to what operators in LA do in their day to day job. Most questions right now are unrelated and seem more general and should not be on a professional exam. Will be meeting with SMEs in April to review exam questions, particularly math, to make sure they make sense. Mr. Gonzalez will reach out to SMEs at the end of February, no more than 10 people.

5.) TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

Training officer presented handouts from the last exam (February) pass/fail rates and how many took exams. TO is working on March exam applications and gave deadline to turn in applications. Once completed, she will post exam letters on the website.

6.) SECRETARY'S REPORT

Nothing reported.

7.) ASSOCIATION REPORTS

LRWA – Rusty Reeves announced date for July conference and is working on the agenda. Also announced mini conference in Alexandria in October. Scheduled 11 courses across the state. Announced they will be getting a new Manufactured Home Community Technician. Will require 24 hrs. of classroom training. Working on how they will administer training for these technicians.

LWEA – nothing to report.

8.) OLD BUSINESS

Had a large discussion about Op Cert Rule change in the last meeting. Mr. Gonzalez gave handouts with highlights of rule change. He has been reaching out to other states about pass rate and how to get more operators in the business. Attended a rule-making round table and learned that He needs to start from scratch. Will redo everything and present to the group again.

Mr. Brandon Snead entered the meeting.

Mr. Gonzalez started presenting the hearing of Mr. Christopher Hughes, who was also present at the meeting. Camille Mize recused herself from the hearing. Tony Nixon was present as a character witness and was asked to take his sworn oath. Mr. Gonzalez read the complaint from Jimmy Cooley that was received June 9th, 2022. The complaint stated that Mr. Hughes was not on site when chlorine was being changed out. The maintenance tech changed out the chlorine and accidentally used Ultron 8187 instead of the usual XY 12. Head of their engineering department insisted that Mr. Hughes be present during all testing. System is testing for metals and continuing to flush out the system.

Barbara Featherston reached out to Mr. Cooley asking for dates that chlorine was changed out with allum and when it was changed back. Mr. Cooley followed up with an email with dates that the incident occurred and readings. Chlorine was replaced 4/24/22 with coagulant, chlorine was installed 6/5/22.

Mr. Hughes could not be present for the last meeting so he wrote a letter. Mr. Gonzales read letter to committee. Mr. Hughes apologized for not catching the mistake earlier. He says he did not check because he was unable to use the equipment in the plant to move the barrels around. He said he took his residual reading before the water went into the water tower.

Curt Brown (maintenance tech) also wrote a letter and Mr. Gonzalez read it to the committee. He says the wrong chemical was added on May 26th and once he realized his mistake, it was resolved on May 31st.

The president of the Alabama water system, Mr. Nixon, wrote a letter that Mr. Gonzalez also read. Mr. Nixon stated Mr. Hughes has been a great operator since he was hired. He says he has been a great asset to the water system and would hire him again.

A handout was given of the residual readings from May to early June for the committee to review. Mr. Gonzalez then introduced the expert witness, Vijai Elango, to go over the chlorine data and answer questions from the last meeting. Vijai took his sworn oath before asking how chlorine is normally collected. Mr. Hughes answered by saying POE after storage tank. Mr. Elango asked what normal production is. Mr. Hughes was unsure due to not having readings. Mr. Elango explained that it takes 2 days to refill storage tank, so by the end of day 2, the chlorine residual should be 0 until chlorine is added to water. Once chlorine is added, it would take another 2 days to see chlorine readings. For the 10 day period recorded, POE should be 0. Any numbers should be highly unlikely.

Mr. Hughes was then allowed to make a statement. He stated that sometimes he didn't know when they would get chlorine. He could not go in the plant or warehouse which is why maintenance had to do it. He said he did not know when chlorine would come so he could not just wait for them because he had a full time job. He said he would contact Mr. Brown and let him know when the chlorine was low. This is why their reserve barrels were there, because they have run into this problem before. Mr. Snead asked if Mr. Hughes was required to be on sight, was it in his job description. Mr. Hughes said no. Mr. Hughes said he does not know how allum got in the water. The plant probably had some other use for it.

Mr. Nixon explained that Mr. Hughes is a great employee and that he gets along well with the board and the vendors. He says he couldn't be more pleased with Mr. Hughes's performance since he started. He is not sure what transpired with this hearing, but he has done well at his system.

Mr. Gonzalez then told the committee they can make a recommendation based on what they heard and saw at the hearing. Mr. Hughes and Mr. Nixon were then directed to step into the hallway so the committee can deliberate.

After further deliberation, Mr. Edmond made a motion on whether or not negligence took place in May 2022. All members agreed that "yay" negligence did occur. Mr. Snead then made a motion recommending 8 hours of technical training and onsite training with LDH engineer from that region to be completed no later than December of 2023. Mr. Edmond seconds the motion. All committee members voted yay.

Mr. Hughes was then called back in to be receive the agreed upon penalty. Mr. Gonzales informed him that the committee voted "yay" that negligence did occur and that all members voted "yay" that as a penalty his license is in probationary status until he completes a technical course and a regional engineer do some on-site training. It must be completed by the end of December 2023 and, if completed, this will be removed from his record.

9.) NEW BUSINESS

None

10.) COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC

None

11.) NEXT MEETING DATE

Next meeting will be May 18th at Hotel Bentley in Alexandria.

Poll was taken to see if committee members would like to continue to stay on the committee. Ronald Turner will be retiring at the end of the year. Will serve until the end of his term or until he retires. Camille Mize will stay for term and revisit. All other committee members voted to stay on the board.

12.) ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Brandon Snead to adjourn, Second by Patrick Edmond. Motion was approved.