

MINUTES
COMMITTEE OF CERTIFICATION
October 17, 2023, 2:30pm
Hotel Bentley
Bayou Roberts Room
200 Desoto St.
Alexandria, LA 71301

1.) ROLL CALL

A. Determination of Quorum.

Committee Members in attendance: Camille Mize – Chairman, Ronald Turner, Patrick Edmond, Sidney Bazley, Lacey Landrum, Brandon Snead, Michael Chauffe, Jennifer Kihlken

Committee Members Absent: Joanne Massony, Lacy Landrum

A quorum was achieved.

Recognition of Visitors and Others:

LDH personnel in attendance: Esteban Gonzalez, Reyna Anderson Duffus, Colby McGruder, David McCay, Vijaikrishna Elango, Michael Norman, Hannah Beatty, Barbara Featherston,

Others in Attendance: William Daniel, Qiana Maple, Pat Cradeur, Wes White,

2.) MINUTES

The minutes from the July 18, 2023 meeting were presented. Motion by Ronald Turner, Second by Patrick Edmond to approve meeting minutes. Motion was approved.

3.) CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Brought up grievance regarding examination review after operators failed exam. Advised that some operators did not get a satisfactory review or answer. Administrator went over examination review process and advised that several operators choose not to review due to distance to Baton Rouge, other operators request that the scantron be reviewed for errors only and then choose to not come in.

Question was brought regarding the ability to conduct exam reviews in other places throughout the state. Administrator advised it was not possible due to staff and inability to distribute exam to non-Operator Certification personnel due to need to protect content of exam.

4.) ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Nearing end of A-J cycle. Software is finally updated so will be able to run a timely closeout and send out renewals in February of 2024. Newsletter notice will go out as well to remind A-J operators of cycle closeout.

New POS system setup to make credit card payments easy at exam sites.

Currently working on method to establish online exams at community colleges and other testing centers. Working with third party vendor to determine how this will be administered and bring back to committee for review as well as to determine a sunset period to end in person exams.

5.) TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

Have had three exams since last meeting. Lake Charles in July, Luling in August, and Ruston in September.

Exam on Friday in Alexandria currently has approximately 230 operators signed up.

Training officer presented pass/fail report for the previous three exams.

Presented 2024 Exam Schedule for review. Training Officer was asked to review Water Distribution 4 for any pass rate issues. Administrator advised that all exams are currently being reviewed and updated with a target date of January 2024 for the new exams to be in circulation.

6.) SECRETARY'S REPORT

No Report

7.) ASSOCIATION REPORTS

Louisiana Conference – No report, no attendees

LRWA – At mini conference 155 in certification classes. 91 in 24 hour technical classes. Approximately 30 vendors and booths. Will continue with their circuit rider programs and other assistance they provide with updates from the national conference. Last year LRWA personnel conducted about 6,000 on-site visits for assistance.

LWEA – No report, no attendees

8.) OLD BUSINESS

Chris Hughes – has until the end of the year to complete technical training and an 8-hour in house course with LRWA. Has already completed technical training with LDH staff.

Rule Change – Working with Sidney Becnel for the draft review and will present once obtained.

9.) NEW BUSINESS

LDH Region 7 request for hearing regarding City of Shreveport.

Brandon Snead has recused himself from the Committee deliberations for this since he is an employee for the City of Shreveport but will speak for the City. Notice was read by administrator. R7 advised that there are an insufficient amount of properly certified operators in order to maintain a sustainable 24/7 operation as required for surface water systems. The main concern also includes that several of the staff listed are lab personnel that are not actively involved in the operation of the plant and are instead in the lab where they do not have access to the control room.

Response to request was submitted by City of Shreveport and also read into the record by administrator. Response advised that there is no violation and the City of Shreveport, nor any other public water system should have to respond or face punishment for a situation that MAY happen. They have met the requirement per the letter of the law and the operator certification rule and that should be sufficient.

Hannah Beatty spoke for Region 7 and stated that based on their Sanitary Survey the personnel listed on shift schedule to man the surface water treatment plant seemed insufficient with multiple personnel listed for over 50 hours per week. Jennifer Kihlken added that the reason for the meeting request is due to the operator certification rule that states that the Committee can ultimately determine the number of operators that a system must have in order to stay in compliance and is requesting that the Committee review and decide if they believe that more operators are necessary.

Camille Mize stated that she believes that the entire state is short on operators and will not tell the City of Shreveport that they have to have more operators on-site when they are already having a personnel shortage. Camille believes that the schedule provided by the City of Shreveport is sufficient.

Qiana Maples advised that the City faced many shortages that began during the pandemic and in order to continue to operate and maintain an operator on every shift they have had to move personnel around and cross-train in order to have other personnel cover when needed. They have also updated the pay and do have personnel that are working more shifts than are usually required and are in agreement that it may not be sustainable long-term but they are in the process of filling the gaps. Brandon Snead also agreed that while their current situation is short-term they still have not committed a violation and feel that this should be removed and dismissed.

Jennifer Kihlken advised that the City of Shreveport has had previous issues in the past including issues with filters and disinfection byproducts that the region feels could be attributed to the lack of operators. William Daniels responded that the plant is currently undergoing a 30 million dollar upgrade and that the issues they have seen recently can be attributed to the upgrades, construction, and supply chain issues rather than the lack of operators. Ultimately does not believe that they should have to respond to things that may happen only things that do happen. Also states that he believes that if the state wants them to have more operators they should also give the city the funds to hire more operators. They have also been increasing pay in order to keep operators. Is ultimately more concerned about the NOV that they received versus the request for the operator certification hearing notice.

Qiana Maples wanted more information from the state regarding different methods that the City of Shreveport could do in order to foster more attention to water and wastewater operators. Ronnie Turner believes that the answer is more education to the public regarding the importance of water and wastewater operators and ultimately will need legislation to improve and protect water and the operators. Brandon Snead advised that he believes City of Shreveport is moving forward with increases to operator pay and bringing issues before the board in order to place importance behind the operators.

Motion by Camille to dismiss request to require City of Shreveport to have more operators on staff
Second by Ronnie Turner. Motion was approved.

Operator Complaint against Bernard Daniels

Mr. Daniels was not present during meeting, attempted to call and Mr. Daniels did not answer.

John Williams, chief complainant was contacted via phone for meeting. Complaint alleges fraud and intent to deceive or perhaps is simply incapable to perform his duties on behalf of Bernard Daniels as he served as Utility Director and Supervisor of Franklin water system.

1. Complaint alleges Mr. Daniels kept calibration, validation, and maintenance records on a binder that he was not able to produce and instead stated that a Hach tech must of mistakenly taken it from the facility. Mr. Daniels contacted Hach's customer service while the LDH team was onsite and Hach was not able to find a service contract. LDH contact David Maxwell, Hach's regional sales manager and David confirmed there was no service contract but that they did complete a service call in February of 2023 for a chlorine analyzer and bench top colorimeter. He did not have any information for service for a turbidity meter or any miscellaneous charge for a non-Hach instrument. LDH believes the binder does not exist and that saying that a Hach tech mistakenly took binder was an act of deceit.

2. Calibration/Validation – Benchtop Comparison

Mr. Daniels advised method of verifying grab samples with the continuous individual filter turbidity meters to ensure they were the same. LDH was able to download data from the turbidity meters and compare them with the grab samples leading LDH staff to find multiple issues confirming that samples were either not being completed or not being compared to turbidity meters. It was alter determined that the meters were not always functional and when they were the data being collected was different from the grab sample data.

3. Grab samples are only allowed for no more than five working days when a turbidity meter goes down but Franklin had been conducting this for 18 months.

4. Monthly Operating Reports were signed and submitted by Mr. Daniels from August 2022 – July 2023 stating that each filter was monitoring continuously, measurements were recorded every fifteen minutes, and that there was no failure of the equipment. This report is signed under penalty of perjury.

Michael Normand and Vijaikrishna Elango presented this information in great detail with the Committee since they were both at the Sanitary Survey visit and witness all of these issues.

Mr. Daniels responded with a written letter stating that he never said he had a contract only that he had someone come in to do repairs. During the repairs that were completed the Hach tech must of inadvertently taken his binder with the data that he was mentioning. Mr. Daniels also believes that he validates every day, this includes the pH

meters, spectrometers and colorimeters. He does admit that what was not done well was the calibration of the turbidity meters. They hired someone that was not properly certified and he learned the day before the survey that the turbidity meters were not calibrated. Says that he is the director of works and is over 5 plants so he cannot do everything in detail. Mr. Daniels states that he has been a supervisor since 2002 and has worked hard for his licenses and feels that this is false reporting in order to try and strip him of his licenses.

After deliberation by committee motion by Pat Edmond to bring Bernard Daniels to an Administrative hearing. Second by Ronnie Turner. Motion was approved.

Bernard Daniels called in after and confirmed that he understood that he would be called for Administrative hearing in the future and did not have further comments.

Indian Hills Complaint

Complaint resolved prior to meeting. Contract with Operator was cut short and system was unable to get data from operator. Operator submitted data to system prior to Committee meeting.

10.) COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC

None

11.) NEXT MEETING DATE

January 18, 2024

12.) ADJOURNMENT

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