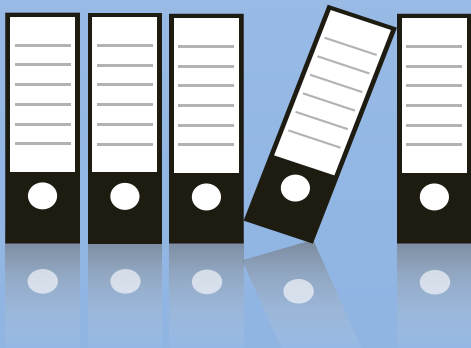
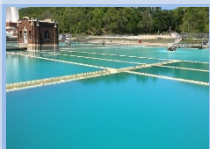
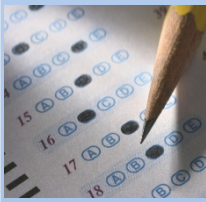


GETTING AND MAINTAINING YOUR WATER TREATMENT OPERATOR CERTIFICATION IN CALIFORNIA



www.AmericanWaterCollege.org/California

Introduction

This guide is intended to be a public service of American Water College. The information provided was obtained from the California State Water Resources Control Board Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (SWRCB-DWOCB) and is believed to be accurate.



Throughout this resource, we have provided you with links to the source information. We encourage you to utilize these links to the SWRCB website as you work through the process of obtaining or renewing your California Water Treatment Operator Certification.

<https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/>

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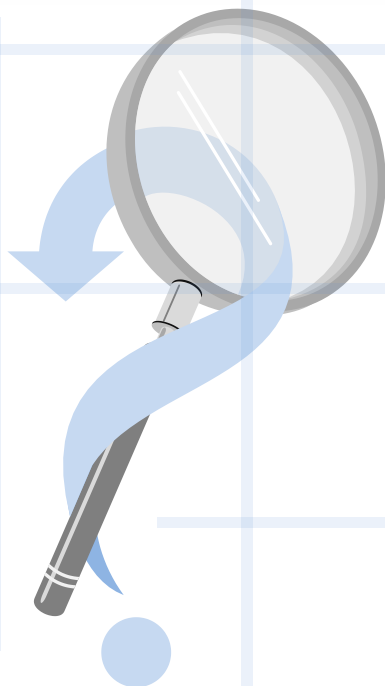
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Certification Overview

Water Treatment Operator Certification Overview

The water treatment industry is a noble profession. If you are reading this guide, you are either already serving in or are considering a career in a field which greatly contributes to the high degree of public health and quality of life we enjoy in this country. This first section gives you a basic overview of the process you can follow to get and maintain your Water Treatment Operator Certification in the state of California.

California Water Treatment Operator Certification is governed by the following state regulations:

[Operator Certification Regulations](#)

[Drinking Water Operator Certification Statutes as amended via AB 2890](#)

An individual who makes decisions addressing the operational activities identified in Subsection 63770(c) must possess a distribution operator certificate or possess a treatment operator certificate and have appropriate training to make such decisions. An individual who makes decisions addressing the operational activities identified in Subsection 63770(d) must possess either a distribution operator certificate or a treatment operator certificate.



To become certified as a water treatment operator, an applicant must:

1. Meet the minimum qualifications to take the exam
2. Submit the exam application with the applicable fee
3. Pass the applicable exam (minimum score of 70%)
4. Meet the minimum qualifications for certification
5. Submit the application for certification with applicable fee

American Water College offers [COURSES](#) to help you meet the education requirements and prepare to pass your certification exams the first time. Our exam preparation courses cover all the material you need to know. We use a proven system with the most effective training methods so you will go into your exam with the confidence you need to succeed. Click [HERE](#) to download your FREE copy of [Certification Exam Tips](#).

The remainder of this guide outlines the education and experience requirements for you to get and maintain your Water Treatment Operator Certification.

Grade 1 Requirements

Education Requirements

- Accredited High School diploma or GED*

* High school/GED equivalency for grades 1 and 2 ONLY can be fulfilled with successful completion of the Basic Small Water System Operations course OR 1 year as an operator of a facility that required an understanding of chemical feeds, hydraulic systems, or pumps.

Application for Examination

- Submit [APPLICATION FOR WATER TREATMENT OPERATOR EXAMINATION](#) and fee to SWRCB-DWOCP

Work Experience Requirements

- No work experience requirements

Application for Certification

- After successfully passing an exam, you will receive a notice to apply for your certification. For Grades 1 and 2, simply complete and mail back the bottom portion of the pass notice with the proper fee to SWRCB-DWOCP.
- Applications for certification can be submitted up to three years after the date of the exam you passed.



Grade 2 Requirements

Education Requirements

- Accredited High School diploma or GED*

AND

- One 36-contact-hour (3-unit) course in [drinking water treatment](#).

* High school/GED equivalency for grades 1 and 2 ONLY can be fulfilled with successful completion of the Basic Small Water System Operations course OR 1 year as an operator of a facility that required an understanding of chemical feeds, hydraulic systems, or pumps.

Application for Examination

- Submit [APPLICATION FOR WATER TREATMENT OPERATOR EXAMINATION](#) and fee to SWRCB-DWOCP

Work Experience Requirements

- No work experience requirements

Application for Certification

- After successfully passing an exam, you will receive a notice to apply for your certification. For Grades 1 and 2, simply complete and mail back the bottom portion of the pass notice with the proper fee to SWRCB-DWOCP.
- Applications for certification can be submitted up to three years after the date of the exam you passed.



Grade 3 Requirements

Education Requirements

- Accredited High School diploma or GED

AND

- Two 36-contact-hour (3-unit) courses; one of which is in [drinking water treatment](#) **AND** a second course in either drinking water treatment, wastewater treatment, or [distribution](#).

Application for Examination

- Submit [APPLICATION FOR WATER TREATMENT OPERATOR EXAMINATION](#) and fee to SWRCB-DWOC

Examination and Work Experience Requirements

- Successful completion of the Water Treatment Operator Grade 3 (T3) operator examination within the three years prior to submitting the application for certification

AND

- One year of operator experience working as a certified Grade 2 Water Treatment Operator for a T2 facility or higher (may be substituted with (3) below)

AND

- One additional year of operator experience working as a certified treatment operator (may be substituted with (1), (2) or (4) below)



Grade 3 Requirements (cont.)

Experience Substitutions

1. A relevant degree earned at an accredited academic institution may be substituted as follows:

- Associate Degree or Certificate in Water or Wastewater Technology that includes at least 15 units of physical, chemical, or biological science may be used to fulfill 1 year of additional operator experience.
- Bachelor Degree in biology, chemical engineering, chemistry, civil engineering, environmental engineering, microbiology, public health, and sanitary engineering may be used to fulfill 1.5 years of additional operator experience.
- Master's Degree in biology, chemical engineering, chemistry, civil engineering, environmental, microbiology, public health, and sanitary engineering may be used to fulfill 2 years of additional operator experience.

2. A certified operator may substitute, on a day-for-day basis, experience gained while working with lead responsibility for water quality related projects or research (i.e., pilot plant).

3. If an applicant has a Bachelor of Science or Master of Science Degree, completion of a comprehensive operator training program, pursuant to Section 63800 (h), may be substituted for the required experience.

4. Experience gained as a certified wastewater treatment operator may be used to substitute up to 2 years of the additional experience requirement. Wastewater treatment operator experience is credited on a two-for-one basis (2 months in wastewater = 1 month in drinking water).



Application for Certification

- Applications for certification can be submitted up to three years after the date of the exam you passed. This allows you time to meet the experience requirements if necessary.
- Submit your completed [Certification Application](#), filing fees and required documentation:
 - ✓ A signed and dated [Supervisor Letter](#)
 - ✓ Utility Organization Chart
 - ✓ System Classification Letter
 - ✓ Official Job Description(s) for the position(s) you held

Grade 4 Requirements

Education Requirements

- A valid grade T3 operator certificate.

AND

- Three 36-contact-hour (3-unit) courses; two of which are in [drinking water treatment](#) **AND** a third course in either [drinking water treatment](#), wastewater treatment, or [distribution](#).

Application for Examination

- Submit [APPLICATION FOR WATER TREATMENT OPERATOR EXAMINATION](#) and fee to SWRCB-DWOC

Examination and Work Experience Requirements

- Successful completion of the Water Treatment Operator Grade 4 (T4) operator examination within the three years prior to submitting the application for certification

AND

- One year of operator experience working as a shift or chief operator, while holding a valid T3 operator certificate for a T3 facility or higher (may be substituted with (3) below)

AND

- Three additional years of operator experience working as a certified treatment operator (may be substituted with (1) or (4) below)



Grade 4 Requirements (cont.)

Experience Substitutions

1. A relevant degree earned at an accredited academic institution may be substituted as follows:
 - Associate Degree or Certificate in Water or Wastewater Technology that includes at least 15 units of physical, chemical, or biological science may be used to fulfill 1 year of additional operator experience.
 - Bachelor Degree in biology, chemical engineering, chemistry, civil engineering, environmental engineering, microbiology, public health, and sanitary engineering may be used to fulfill 1.5 years of additional operator experience.
 - Master's Degree in biology, chemical engineering, chemistry, civil engineering, environmental, microbiology, public health, and sanitary engineering may be used to fulfill 2 years of additional operator experience.
2. A certified operator may substitute, on a day-for-day basis, experience gained while working with lead responsibility for water quality related projects or research (i.e., pilot plant).
3. If an applicant has a Bachelor of Science or Master of Science Degree, completion of a comprehensive operator training program, pursuant to Section 63800 (h), may be substituted for the required experience.
4. Experience gained as a certified wastewater treatment operator may be used to substitute up to 2 years of the additional experience requirement. Wastewater treatment operator experience is credited on a two-for-one basis (2 months in wastewater = 1 month in drinking water).

Application for Certification

- Applications for certification can be submitted up to three years after the date of the exam you passed. This allows you time to meet the experience requirements if necessary.
- Submit your completed [Certification Application](#), filing fees and required documentation:
 - ✓ A signed and dated [Supervisor Letter](#)
 - ✓ Utility Organization Chart
 - ✓ System Classification Letter
 - ✓ Official Job Description(s) for the position(s) you held



Grade 5 Requirements

Education Requirements

- A valid grade T₄ operator certificate.

AND

- Four 36-contact-hour (3-unit) courses; two of which are in [drinking water treatment](#) AND two additional courses in either [drinking water treatment](#), wastewater treatment, or [distribution](#).

Application for Examination

- Submit [APPLICATION FOR WATER TREATMENT OPERATOR EXAMINATION](#) and fee to SWRCB-DWOCF

Examination and Work Experience Requirements

- Successful completion of the Grade T₅ operator examination within the three years prior to submitting the application for certification

AND

- Two years of operator experience working as a shift or chief operator, while holding a valid T₄ operator certificate for a T₄ facility or higher (no substitutions)

AND

- Three additional years of operator experience working as a certified treatment operator (may be substituted with (1) or (4) below)



Grade 5 Requirements (cont.)

Experience Substitutions

1. A relevant degree earned at an accredited academic institution may be substituted as follows:
 - Associate Degree or Certificate in Water or Wastewater Technology that includes at least 15 units of physical, chemical, or biological science may be used to fulfill 1 year of additional operator experience.
 - Bachelor Degree in biology, chemical engineering, chemistry, civil engineering, environmental engineering, microbiology, public health, and sanitary engineering may be used to fulfill 1.5 years of additional operator experience.
 - Master's Degree in biology, chemical engineering, chemistry, civil engineering, environmental, microbiology, public health, and sanitary engineering may be used to fulfill 2 years of additional operator experience.
2. A certified operator may substitute, on a day-for-day basis, experience gained while working with lead responsibility for water quality related projects or research (i.e., pilot plant).
3. If an applicant has a Bachelor of Science or Master of Science Degree, completion of a comprehensive operator training program, pursuant to Section 63800 (h), may be substituted for the required experience.
4. Experience gained as a certified wastewater treatment operator may be used to substitute up to 2 years of the additional experience requirement. Wastewater treatment operator experience is credited on a two-for-one basis (2 months in wastewater = 1 month in drinking water).

Application for Certification

- Applications for certification can be submitted up to three years after the date of the exam you passed. This allows you time to meet the experience requirements if necessary.
- Submit your completed [Certification Application](#), filing fees and required documentation:
 - ✓ A signed and dated [Supervisor Letter](#)
 - ✓ Utility Organization Chart
 - ✓ System Classification Letter
 - ✓ Official Job Description(s) for the position(s) you held



Continuing Education

Requirements

In order to renew your certification, you must submit proof of completion for the number of continuing education contact hours as listed below. Acceptable drinking water courses must have been completed within the past 3 years of the Due Date listed on your renewal and not used on a prior renewal. You may use your contact hours for both distribution and treatment renewals.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Required Contact Hours	12 Hours	16 Hours	24 Hours	36 Hours	36 Hours

American Water College has conveniently bundled [Continuing Education Packages](#) to help you meet your renewal requirements. Just click on the number of hours you need in the table above or click [HERE](#) to select a course if you only need a few more hours.



Certification Renewal

Requirements

- Certifications must be renewed every three years
- Your certificate renewal form and payment are due four months prior to the certificate expiration date
 - ✓ A courtesy renewal reminder is mailed to your address of record approximately two months prior to your due date
 - ✓ It is your responsibility to pay the renewal fee and provide information regarding your continuing education on time even if you do not receive the renewal reminder
- Submit [Renewal Form](#) with:
 - ✓ Applicable renewal fee
 - ✓ Proof of the required number of continuing education hours during your renewal period

