

**Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Community Water Systems
Drinking Water Operator Certification Program
2014 Annual Report**

1. Authorization:

The Illinois Drinking Water Operator Certification Program was approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on February 8, 2001.

While there have not been any statutory changes to the program since it was approved by USEPA, in August 2012, the Illinois EPA added Subpart J to Drinking Water Operator Certification Program regulations, 35 Ill. Adm. Code 680. These regulations set forth procedural rules governing the Agency's approval process for contracts between certified operators and community water supplies. Effective on April 1, 2014 a new "Operator in Training" certificate status went into effect. In addition, maximum limits on certain types of training for certificate renewal credit will go into effect July 1, 2017.

2. Classification of Systems, Facilities, and Operators:

- Class D community water systems are systems limited to pumpage, storage, or distribution.

Total Class D water systems: 416
Total without properly certified responsible operators: 4
Percent Compliance: 99.0%

- Class C community water systems are systems whose treatment facilities are limited to chemical feeding.

Total Class C water systems: 760
Total without properly certified responsible operators: 6
Percent Compliance: 99.2%

- Class B community water systems are systems whose treatment facilities include filtration, aeration and filtration, or ion exchange equipment.

Total Class B water systems: 425
Total without properly certified responsible operators: 4
Percent Compliance: 99.0%

- Class A community water systems are surface water systems whose treatment facilities include coagulation, lime softening, or sedimentation.

Total Class A water systems: 140
Total without properly certified responsible operators: 1
Percent Compliance: 99.3%

- The total number of active certified drinking water operators is 3,759.

3. Operator Qualifications:

Originally, there were 139 community water systems (with 149 grandparented operators) required to have certified operators for the first time as a result of revising our drinking water operator certification program to meet the U.S. EPA's minimum guidelines. Operators with grandparented certificates were required to successfully complete a special course developed and provided by the Illinois EPA in order for their certificates to be renewed by July 1, 2003. After July 1, 2003, all operators with grandparented certificates were required to meet the same training criteria as the non-grandparented operators for subsequent certificate renewals. There are 35 grandparented operators still actively operating public water supplies in Illinois.

4. Enforcement:

Non-compliant community water supplies are immediately advised, via Non-Compliance Advisories (NCAs), of the serious nature of not having a properly certified responsible operator and options for achieving compliance. Supplies that fail to achieve compliance are sent Violation Notices (VNs), pursuant to Section 31 of the Illinois Environmental Protection Act. These VNs include an opportunity to establish a short-term schedule to achieve compliance. Supplies that do not satisfactorily respond to the VNs are referred to the Illinois Attorney General's office for formal enforcement action and the imposition of penalties.

The Illinois EPA currently has a certification compliance rate of 99.1% with 15 non-compliant community water supplies. During this reporting period, we have sent out 58 NCAs and 17 VNs.

5. Certification Renewal:

The Illinois EPA began accepting course pre-approval submissions in January 2000. Thousands of seminars, on-line, classroom and correspondence courses have been approved since January 2000 and deemed suitable for Illinois operators to use for Renewal Training Credits.

The Illinois EPA phased in the renewal training requirement with approximately one third of the operators renewing their expiring certificates each year. After July 1, 2003, all Illinois drinking water operators were required to have training as a prerequisite for their certificate renewals. In this reporting period, 1,211 operators have successfully completed the required training and have renewed their certificates.

# of active operators set to expire 7/1/2014	1,409
# met renewal requirement	1,211
# not renewed (certificate expired, retired, deceased, etc.)	198
# of new certified operators (since last report)	194
# of operator in training certificates issued	2

In March of the year that their certificate is set to expire, operators are sent Renewal Application Forms and Training Summary Reports to advise them of their remaining hours required for certificate renewal. The Illinois EPA provides an *Approved Drinking Water Training Course Catalog* to operators upon request. The *Approved Drinking Water Training Course Catalog* is also available on the Illinois EPA website.

6. Resources Needed to Implement the Program:

Staff – The Illinois EPA’s Drinking Water Supply Operator Certification Program is administered by the Compliance Assurance Section of the Division of Public Water Supplies and 1.5 FTE (one full time staff and one part time intern) is needed to administer the program. Michael Crumly, Manager of the Compliance Assurance Section oversaw implementation of Program during the bulk of the reporting period. Since June 2014 this position has been vacant.

In addition, the Division of Public Water Supplies Field Operations Section staff proctor certification examinations at each of the Illinois EPA’s regional offices.

7. Program Review:

External Reviews

- July, 2010 – The DW certification program was audited by the Illinois Office of the Auditor General. The Auditor General had one material finding with respect to the program. Based upon the review, the Illinois EPA has not provided a review/approval of contractual operator agreements consistent with state statute. To mitigate this finding, in August 2012, the Illinois EPA added Subpart J to Drinking Water Operator Certification Program regulations, 35 Ill. Adm. Code 680. These regulations set forth procedural rules governing the Agency’s approval process for contracts between certified operators and community water supplies. As implementation begins over the next 90 days, the Field Operations Section will initiate contract reviews during sanitary surveys. As part of this inspection, the Illinois EPA will document that an agreement between the water supply and the contractual responsible operator in charge exists. At this time, the Illinois EPA will also document the adequacy of the contractual agreement. If deficiencies are noted in the contract, the Illinois EPA will follow the enforcement process outlined within the Illinois Environmental Protection Act.
- In March 2013, the certification data system modifications were completed and released to the public. Drinking water operators can now use the data system (via web site) to review their certification/personal records and enter their own renewal training credit hours. Web link:

<http://dataservices.epa.illinois.gov/operatorcertification/opcertwelcome.aspx>
- On September 11, 2013 and March 18, 2014, the Illinois EPA met with the Water Supply Operator Certification Advisory Board. The Board reviewed renewal statistics, examination statistics, the Exam Committee Report, reciprocity report, discussed the application/applicant approval process for testing and discussed/reviewed training criteria. The next Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for September 2014.
- On July 14-15, 2014, the Illinois EPA met with the Exam Committee. The new B exam was reviewed. The new Class B exam will be ready for use within the next 6 months. The next Exam Committee meeting will be held in 2015. The new Class A exam is in use.

Internal Reviews

- a. Certification compliance & enforcement – The Illinois EPA has implemented a monthly certification compliance tracking that identifies those facilities in need of a properly certified responsible operator. Currently the overall certification compliance rate is 99.1%.
- b. Fee processing – Ongoing monthly reporting of the fees collected for application, renewal, and reinstatement. Certification renewal fees are logged in directly in the Compliance Assurance Section and then sent to Fiscal Services.

8. Implementation Schedule Update:

All major program elements for our base drinking water operator certification program have been implemented. This includes the Drinking Water Training Reimbursement Program.

9. Expense Reimbursement Grant (ERG) Grant Status:

- Approximately 235 CWS operators were trained under the training reimbursement program.
- ERG funds were used to develop a Mobile Training Unit for Drinking Water Operators by the Illinois Rural Water Association.
- ERG funds were used to upgrade the training facilities at the Environmental Resources Training Center (ERTC) located in Edwardsville Illinois.
- Approval was granted to use ERG funds to provide ERTC alternative electrical sources to power their training facility. This project includes the installation of solar panels and wind turbines and will provide a truly unique training experience for Illinois’ water utility operators. The installation work is nearly complete.
- An ERG time extension request, to December 31, 2012, was granted by USEPA Region V. The additional time is needed to complete the alternative energy project and the certification data system modifications approved under the grant.
- ERG Spending/Drawdown Rates

GRANT AMOUNT:	\$3,753,300
SPENT TO DATE:	\$3,753,300
BALANCE:	\$0