

Rule Adoption Notice

Ecology adopts amendments to Wastewater Operator Certification Rule

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) is adopting changes to chapter 173-230 WAC, Certification of Operators of Wastewater Treatment Plants (Rule). This Rule establishes the classifications for wastewater treatment plants and the requirements for certification of wastewater treatment plant operators. This Rule affects owners and certified operators of wastewater treatment plants, as well as those interested in becoming certified operators of wastewater treatment plants.

The changes to the Rule include the following:

- Establishes a new fee schedule as directed by the Legislature in 2018.
- Provides for an Operator in Training and respective education and experience qualifications for Groups II-IV.
- Acknowledges new technologies in wastewater treatment.
- Creates standalone sections where more information and clarity were needed.
- Clarifies Rule language to codify existing program practices.

The only change made from the proposed Rule was the addition of two allowable types of relevant experience, one inadvertently removed and another as clarification based on questions asked at a public hearing.

Documents available for review:

- CR 103 Form: <https://ecology.wa.gov/1802AdoptNotice>
- Final Adopted Rule language: <https://ecology.wa.gov/1802AdoptLanguage>
- Ecology’s response to comments received during the public comment period is now available. Download a copy at <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/1910023.html> To see the comments Ecology received visit: <http://ws.ecology.commentinput.com/?id=gPMjY>

Rule Adoption Date: July 10, 2019
Rule Effective Date: August 10, 2019
New Fees begin: September 1, 2019

Category	Amount for Fiscal Year 2020	Amount for Fiscal Year 2021
Group I and Group I OIT (Operator in Training) Applications	\$50.00	\$50.00
Groups II through IV Applications and Groups II through IV OIT Applications	\$59.00	\$67.00
Renewals	\$64.00	\$98.00

By law, Ecology must fund the Wastewater Operator Certification Program with fees; however, the law has capped the fees since the 1980s. Rising costs over almost 40 years have meant that we’ve been unable to keep up with this obligation. The Legislature recognized this and removed the fee cap from the law and directed Ecology to establish a new fee schedule in the Rule.

Ecology formed and worked with a Rule Advisory Committee (RAC)—made up of certified operators from around the state and from each Group level—to advise us on the changes. The RAC suggested we invert the historic fee structure, placing more of the burden to fund the program on renewal fees instead of application fees.

This change in the structure allowed us to reduce the overall fee increases for both the application and the renewal fees. It also allowed us to keep Group I and Group I Operator in Training application fees unchanged.

At a time when the profession is losing its most experienced operators to retirement, we hope keeping entry-level application fees more affordable will incentivize entry into the profession. This was a key concern expressed by the RAC and we worked hard to address it.

Rule Adoption Notice

New Operator in Training (OIT) Group II – IV

Ecology added new OIT Group levels II-IV to the Rule to incentivize and encourage entry into and growth within the profession. These new OIT Group levels are for those that can pass the next higher Group level exam, but don't meet the certification requirements to qualify for a full certification at that higher Group level. OIT exams must be taken in sequential order.

Operators that meet the full certification requirements do not have to advance to higher Group levels through the OIT process and do not have to take exams in sequential order—which is the current practice.

Applicants who already hold a full certification may apply for an OIT certification one level above their full certification level. If they pass the exam for that level, they will hold an OIT certification for that level as well as their full certification.

Group II – IV OIT certifications can be held for two exam cycles, up to 10 years, while gaining the necessary experience to upgrade to the next Group level for full certification. While holding an OIT II-IV certification, operators are only required to meet the professional growth requirements for their full certification and will pay only one renewal fee.

Contact

Please contact Poppy Carre at poca461@ecy.wa.gov or 360-407-6449 for more information or for Technical Assistance to comply with this Rule.

Special accommodations

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-6600 or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

Appeal Procedures

This adoption can be appealed under procedures described in the Administrative Procedure Act (RCW 34.05), including those found in RCW 34.05.330.

El Departamento de Ecología adoptó una nueva reglamentación, Capítulo 173-230 WAC Certificación de operadores de plantas de tratamiento de aguas residuales (Certification of Operators of Wastewater Treatment Plants). Para más información favor de llamar a Jocelyn Jones al 360-407-6321 y solicitar un intérprete.

Bộ Môi Sinh đã phê chuẩn một đạo luật mới, Chương 173-230 WAC: Chứng Chỉ Cho Người Điều Hành Nhà Máy Xử Lý Nước Thải (Certification of Operators of Wastewater Treatment Plants). Để biết thêm thông tin hoặc cần thông dịch viên, xin liên hệ Jocelyn Jones tại số 360-407-6321.

주 환경부는 폐수처리장 관리자의 자격 인증과 관련된 법규를 수정했습니다 (Chapter 173-230 WAC Certification of Operators of Wastewater Treatment Plants). 보다 자세한 사항을 원하시면 Jocelyn Jones 씨에게 전화해서 (360-407-6321) 통역을 요청하십시오.

華盛頓州生態管理署正式修訂華盛頓州行政法令173-230章漏廢水處理廠作業員證照 (Certification of Operators of Wastewater Treatment Plants)。若需更多訊息或翻譯員服務, 請聯絡 Jocelyn Jones 電話: 360-407-6321。