
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Overview of the Water System Operator Certification Program

Having qualified individuals to operate public water systems is an important part of public health protection. Therefore [NH RSA 332-E](#) and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) administrative rule [Env-Dw 502](#) require public water systems (PWSs) to have certified water works operators responsible for their operation and maintenance. Certified water works operators are at the forefront in providing safe, reliable drinking water.

New Hampshire has five grades of certification for water works operators, from grade 1A (the most basic) to grade 4 (the most advanced). Each grade has its own education and experience requirements (see *Table 1* below). To become a certified water works operator in New Hampshire, an individual must meet the education and experience requirements of the certification grade level for which they are applying, submit a completed application with fee, and pass the certification examination with a grade of 70% or higher. In-person certification exams will resume in the near future; however, currently there is an opportunity to take Treatment and Distribution Grades I-IV exams online at various locations throughout the state. Under the operator-in-training (OIT) provision, an individual may apply to take a grade 1 exam without prior water works experience. There are also provisions for OIT for grades 2 and 3 as well as education and experience substitution possibilities.

GRADE	EDUCATION (yrs)	EXPERIENCE (yrs)*
IV	16	6
III	14	4
II	12	3
I	12	1
IA	12	0.5**

*At least 50% of experience must be actual operating experience at a plant classified no more than one grade below the grade for which an applicant is applying.

**or completion of the Small Public Water System Operators Course, held spring and fall.

Certification Period

Water works operator certificates are issued for a period of up to 2 years and expire on December 31 of odd-numbered years. Operators must complete a renewal application and meet continuing education requirements to renew a certification and maintain it as active.

For More Information

Please contact the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at [\(603\) 271-2410](tel:6032712410), by email at dwgbcertop@des.nh.gov or visit the [certified operator webpage](#) on our website.

Note: This fact sheet is accurate as of February 2024. Statutory or regulatory changes or the availability of additional information after this date may render this information inaccurate or incomplete.