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# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

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## Wastewater Treatment Certification

Wastewater treatment plant operators play a key role in protecting New Hampshire's surface waters and groundwater. Operators maintain and operate various types of mechanical and computerized equipment in wastewater treatment facilities in order to remove the harmful components from wastewater and render the water suitable for discharge to a surface water or to groundwater. They operate and maintain pumps, pipes, valves and processing equipment to move wastewater through collection systems and through various treatment processes. They read and interpret meters and gauges. They also operate chemical-feeding devices, perform laboratory analyses and keep records of their work. They must be able to take on many different tasks and be familiar with electricity, mechanics, chemistry, microbiology, hydraulics and many other disciplines.

Due to the importance of ensuring that wastewater is properly contained, conveyed and treated prior to being discharged, New Hampshire law requires public wastewater treatment plants to be operated only by operators who have been certified by the Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). The certification process is designed to make sure that certified operators have the knowledge and ability to properly operate and maintain such plants and the associated collection systems.

Individuals who are interested in becoming a certified wastewater operator in New Hampshire who are not certified elsewhere must pass a written examination. Individuals who are certified elsewhere can apply to be certified by reciprocity (that is, without taking the examination) for Grades I, II, and III. The qualifications for each of the certification grades are as follows:

Grade	Experience	Education	Comments
I-OIT	0	12 years	HS diploma or HSE <sup>1</sup> for education; upgrade to Grade I after earning 1 year full-time related work experience
I	1 year	12 years	HS diploma or HSE for education
II-OIT	1 year	12 years	HS diploma or HSE for education
	Or 0 years	13 years	HS or HSE <b>plus</b> 1 year wastewater certificate
II	3 years	12 years	HS diploma or HSE for education
III-OIT	2 years	14 years	HS or HSE <b>plus</b> 90 CEUs or 2 years college
III	4 years	14 years	HS or HSE <b>plus</b> 90 CEUs or 2 years college
IV-OIT	4 years	14 years	HS or HSE <b>plus</b> 90 CEUs or 2 years college
IV	6 years	14 years	HS or HSE <b>plus</b> 90 CEUs or 2 years college

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<sup>1</sup> HSE refers to a High School Equivalency Certificate such as a G.E.D.

**Certification by Examination:** Examinations are usually held in June and December of each year at the NHDES Operator Training Center in Franklin. Applicants must submit a complete, signed application with a \$50 fee no later than two months prior to the date of the examination. (All application forms must be obtained from NHDES, either at the address above or from the NHDES website at <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wweb/documents/certapp.pdf>.) The Certification Committee established by statute reviews each application and required supporting documents, determines the applicant's eligibility, and notifies the applicant in writing of whether he or she has qualified to take the examination. An applicant must achieve a score of 70 percent correct or higher to pass an examination for any Grade, including OIT grades. Any applicant who passes the OIT exam for the desired Grade must complete the full experience requirement prior to receiving a full Grade certificate.

**Certification by Reciprocity:** An operator certified in another jurisdiction may apply for reciprocity for Grades I through III by so indicating on the application form. The Certification Committee will review the application and the requirements for certification of the certifying jurisdiction. The Committee will issue a certification by reciprocity if it determines that (1) the requirements of the other jurisdiction are equivalent to New Hampshire's, (2) the individual is actively seeking employment in New Hampshire, and (3) the certification was obtained by examination.

**Meeting with Committee:** Each applicant who meets all requirements for a Grade II or II-OIT or higher certification, whether by examination or reciprocity, must meet with the Certification Committee prior to receiving certification. Certain applicants who meet all requirements for a Grade I certification also must meet with the Committee prior to receiving certification.

**Renewal:** Once an individual is certified, he or she is responsible for renewing the certification every two years. The individual must submit a complete, signed renewal application with a fee of \$50 to NHDES prior to expiration of his or her existing certificate. If the renewal application with full payment is not received prior to the certification's expiration, the certification can still be renewed by submitting the application, renewal fee, and an additional late fee of \$25. After 90 days, the certification is expired and recertification will require a completely new application and retaking of the examination.

**Continuing Education:** Certified operators are required to complete on-going education and training to renew their certifications. Each operator must submit proof that he or she has completed the required number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) with the renewal application. For Grade I and I-OIT, 1.0 CEU is needed per renewal period. For Grades II and above (including OIT grades), 2.0 CEUs are required per renewal period. CEUs are calculated based on ten hours of education equaling 1.0 CEU, or one college credit equaling 1.5 CEUs. If a certified operator earns more than the required number of CEUs, the operator may carry the excess CEUs forward to the next renewal period. A Grade I or I-OIT may carry forward 0.5 CEU, while operators at Grade II and above may carry forward 1.0 CEU.

NHDES offers training courses in the spring and fall of each year at the NHDES Operator Training Center in Franklin. Classes are held during the day, and typically are five hours long with a one-hour lunch break. A wide variety of wastewater-related subjects are addressed during each session. Operators earn CEUs for each class attended. Course schedules and registration materials are available from NHDES approximately four weeks in advance of the first class. Registration is on a first come, first served basis. A nominal fee is charged to cover building and administrative expenses. **For more information:** Contact the NHDES Water Division, Wastewater Engineering Bureau, at (603) 271-3503 or check the NHDES website at [www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov) (look for Wastewater Engineering Bureau in the A to Z list).