



May 11, 2020

TO: State Certification Officials

RE: Flexible Operator Certification/Credentialing Requirements During COVID-19 Response

Dear State Certification Officer:

On behalf of our combined nationwide memberships, the Water Environment Federation (WEF) and the American Water Works Association (AWWA) want to thank you, your staff, and your peers in other state certification/credentialing programs for your work responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Working together, the water sector is proving that we can continue to provide the vital services of water distribution, wastewater collection, water and wastewater treatment so necessary to ensuring public health and protecting the environment under very challenging conditions. Thank you!

As the response to the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the need for social distancing and other factors are limiting drinking water and wastewater operators' ability to meet operator certification/credentialing requirements. Current operator certification/credentialing requirements do not consider the challenges posed by the pandemic as operators attempt to obtain necessary course work and continuing education credits. Drinking water and wastewater systems must have appropriately certified/credentialed employees to operate. WEF and AWWA members in some states continue to encounter difficulties accessing training to renew or upgrade operator certifications/credentials. Specific challenges include:

1. State deadlines for the renewal of operator licenses that cannot be met using available educational opportunities
2. Lack of state approval to utilize online courses to meet operator certification requirements

We appreciate the steps that state programs, including your own, have taken to facilitate operator certification/credentialing during the current pandemic.

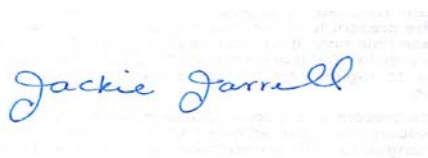
We strongly encourage agencies that have not yet done so to consider, where statutes permit, instituting flexibility or grace periods regarding renewal dates and expediting approval of online courses and training.

Even as some states reduce social distancing requirements, large group events may continue to be prohibited, and measures remain in place to protect essential workers, including travel restrictions. Consequently, many operators are unable to attend in-person training sessions necessary to obtain required continuing education credits. To improve the availability of classes, WEF and AWWA, in concert with our state affiliates, are enhancing our delivery of online training and education opportunities. If you have any thoughts on what type of content would best serve your constituents, we would like to hear from you. We encourage you to reach out and let us know what actions you may have already taken.

Increased interstate cooperation could potentially contribute to greater resilience by expediting the restoration of essential services to your communities. We urge you to explore the creation of reciprocity policies with contiguous states during emergencies and extreme weather events.

WEF and AWWA are dedicated to the protection of public health and the environment and look forward to continuing to partner with you to help our communities to fight and prevail over COVID-19 and its impacts. Should you have questions or want to engage further to collaborate in this effort, please contact our local affiliates, Claudio Ternieden, WEF Government Affairs, at cternieden@wef.org or Steve Via, AWWA, Federal Affairs, at svia@awwa.org.

Best regards,



Jacqueline A. Jarrell
President
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James R. Williams
President
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Chief Executive Officer
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cc: State ASDWA Member
State ACWA Member

Who we are:

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization of 35,000 individual members and 75 affiliated Member Associations representing water quality professionals around the world. Since 1928, WEF and its members have protected public health and the environment. As a global water sector leader, our mission is to connect water professionals; enrich the expertise of water professionals; increase the awareness of the impact and value of water; and provide a platform for water sector innovation.

The American Water Works Association is an international, nonprofit, scientific and educational society dedicated to providing total water solutions assuring the effective management of water. Founded in 1881, the Association is the largest organization of water supply professionals in the world. Our membership includes more than 4,000 utilities that supply roughly 80 percent of the nation's drinking water and treat almost half of the nation's wastewater. Our 50,000-plus total membership represents the full spectrum of the water community: public water and wastewater systems, environmental advocates, scientists, academicians, and others who hold a genuine interest in water, our most important resource. AWWA unites the diverse water community to advance public health, safety, the economy, and the environment.