

BEST PRACTICES FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER OPERATORS

As a water and/or wastewater operator, you are a water professional in an occupation that requires education, training, experience, and attainment of State Certification to practice. In this profession, operators are responsible for, and must be dedicated to, the protection of public health and the environment. Operators must act skillfully and conscientiously in a timely fashion. Operators have a direct impact on our environmental and public health, the preservation and protection of which affects the quality of life and safety of all Pennsylvanians and visitors.

While maintaining the high standards established by those in this occupation, operators should consider the following important duties and best practices in carrying out their day-to-day activities:

1. Accept and carry out the responsibilities and rewards of being a water professional. Hold paramount the protection of public health, environmental health, and your system infrastructure.
2. Protect, maintain, and use wisely the resources and funds allocated to you in the operation and maintenance of your system. Manage your system assets in a fashion that promotes sustainable infrastructure. Meet all regulatory requirements in the most cost-effective manner possible. Keep the system owners and customers apprised of the condition of your system at all times. Communicate needs or problems to the system owners regularly.
3. Become familiar with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and permits as issued and enforced by state and federal regulatory authorities. Understand the consequences of violations caused by inaction, negligence, or willful misconduct.
4. Abide by all applicable state and federal laws, rules, regulations, and permits. Notify regulatory authorities and system owners in a timely fashion of any real or potential problems that may result in non-compliance. Maintain all required records and report accurately in a timely fashion. Be objective and truthful in data collection and reporting. Acknowledge errors and refrain from distorting or altering the facts.
5. Carry out duties in a safe, secure, and responsible fashion. Understand the dangers and risks of working in a water/wastewater system. Maintain a safe and secure environment for all system workers, visitors, and the public. Preservation and protection of your human assets and infrastructure is paramount.
6. Attend continuing education sessions and associate with other water professionals to continually enhance your education and knowledge of water/wastewater system operations. Share your knowledge and experiences with others to promote the expansion of knowledge in this profession. Participate in professional associations and organizations to exchange knowledge and valuable information. These associations frequently offer workshops, meetings, and conferences. Work with subordinates and others in your organization and in the profession to pass on institutional knowledge that may otherwise be lost.
7. Work with your customers and the general public to increase their knowledge of the importance of protecting and maintaining clean water. Let them know what they can do to protect and conserve water in their daily activities and protect the assets of your system.
8. Avoid unprofessional practices and act honorably, responsibly, ethically, respectfully, and lawfully so as to enhance the reputation of the profession.

Are there laws or regulations that govern the activities of water and wastewater operators?

Yes, Pennsylvania's Water and Wastewater Systems Operators' Certification Act (Act 322 of 1968, as amended by Act 11 of 2002) and Chapter 302 of the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) regulations for the Administration of the Water and Wastewater Systems Operators' Certification Program (25 Pa. Code Chapter 302) both govern the activities of water and wastewater operators in Pennsylvania.

Where can I get a copy of the laws and regulations pertaining to water and wastewater operators?

You can access the Water and Wastewater Systems Operators' Certification Act through the Pennsylvania General Assembly website at

www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/LI/uconsCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&yr=1968&sessInd=0&smthLwInd=0&act=0322.

You can access a copy of the Chapter 302 regulations through the *Pennsylvania Code* website at www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/025/chapter302/chap302toc.html.

Does DEP provide any training related to these best practices or other ethical decision making courses?

DEP has developed a "Responsibilities of Clean Water Professionals" course which is approved for 3.5 wastewater contact hours in Pennsylvania. A similar course for drinking water system operators is under development. If supervisors have related questions, they should submit those to RA-OperatorWebsite@pa.gov.

For questions, contact the DEP, Bureau of Safe Drinking Water, Operator Certification Program, at 717-787-5236 or the Clean Water Program in DEP's regional offices:

Southeast Regional Office

2 East Main St.

Norristown, PA 19401-4915

Main Telephone: 484-250-5900

24-Hour Emergency: 484-250-5900

Counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia

Southcentral Regional Office

909 Elmerton Ave.

Harrisburg, PA 17110-8200

Main Telephone: 717-705-4700

24-Hour Emergency: 1-800-541-2050

Counties: Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, and York

Southwest Regional Office

400 Waterfront Drive

Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4745

Main Telephone: 412-442-4000

24-Hour Emergency: 412-442-4000

Counties: Allegheny, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Somerset, Washington, and Westmoreland

Northeast Regional Office

2 Public Square

Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701-1915

Main Telephone: 570-826-2511

24-Hour Emergency: 570-826-2511

Counties: Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming

Northcentral Regional Office

208 W. Third St., Suite 101

Williamsport, PA 17701-6448

Main Telephone: 570-327-3636

24-Hour Emergency: 570-327-3636

Counties: Bradford, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga, and Union

Northwest Regional Office

230 Chestnut St.

Meadville, PA 16335-3481

Main Telephone: 814-332-6945

24-Hour Emergency: 800-373-3398

Counties: Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Indiana, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango, and Warren

For more information, visit www.dep.pa.gov, search term: Operator Certification.