

PWEA Position Statement

Wastewater Systems Operations Professionals

Certification and Training



Adopted by PWEA on August 14, 2014

PWEA Mission Statement

Enhance the knowledge and abilities of Pennsylvania's water quality professionals, promote sound sustainable water policies, and promote public awareness of the need to protect water resources.

Certification

The Professional Wastewater Operations Committee is responsible for promoting the development and education of wastewater plant operators. The PWEA supports the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in developing and maintaining a mandatory certification program for wastewater systems operations professionals based on reasonable, appropriate, and applicable standards.

To the extent possible, PWEA works with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP), Water Environment Federation (WEF) other agencies to adopt universal standards for the certification program. Wastewater systems operations professionals should obtain and demonstrate the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities to properly operate and maintain wastewater treatment systems. PWEA believes training, testing and applicable continuing education should be based on a standardized body of knowledge developed by organizations such as the Association of Boards of Certification, WEF, and WEF's Member Associations (MAs).

Until certification of all wastewater plant operators is mandated by governing bodies, PWEA recommends that employers of wastewater systems operations professionals require it. This requirement will support the mission of protecting public health and the environment by enabling properly operated and maintained wastewater treatment and collection systems.

Training and Continuing Education

PWEA advocates that Pennsylvania's certification program continue to require a minimum of applicable continuing education hours as a condition of maintaining certification licenses. In order to be approved for certification, training should be relevant and applicable to the skills and knowledge necessary for the level of certification. Training that is approved by the PADEP should be readily available to all certified wastewater systems operations professionals in a variety of delivery mechanisms, such as traditional classroom and distance-learning training, through as many provider networks as possible (e.g., MAs, state environmental training centers, community colleges, universities, and apprenticeship programs).

Funding

Funding for certification and continuing education programs should be sustainable (i.e., supported by utility revenues) to the extent practicable while not placing an undue burden on the wastewater systems operations professionals being certified or trained or on the facility owners. Additional federal support may assist in the development of national training resources, and help to support training and certification infrastructure at the state or provincial level.

Reciprocity

PWEA encourages Pennsylvania to consider adopting universally standardized certification levels and requirements to advance reciprocating agreements. States and provinces should support opportunities to provide a pathway to reciprocity with other states and provinces.

Certified Wastewater Systems Operations Professionals Recognition

The wastewater profession as a career path is not widely pursued. PWEA advocates the need to perform more public outreach in order to promote the profession and generate interest. PWEA also encourages states and provinces to investigate the development of an official title for certified operators (e.g., "Certified Water Quality Professional) as well as develop succession planning programs for recruitment and retention of wastewater professionals.