

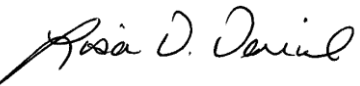


pennsylvania

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

MEMO

TO Water and Wastewater Operator
Examination Providers

FROM Lisa D. Daniels 
Director
Bureau of Safe Drinking Water

DATE March 23, 2020

RE Water and Wastewater Operator Certification Exams during
COVID-19 Response

The following provides a summary of the current guidance from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP or Department) and the Operator Certification Board regarding upcoming water and wastewater operator certification exams during the response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Please note that this is subject to change as the situation evolves.

It is critical to the Department, the Certification Board, and the industry that adequate water and wastewater testing opportunities are maintained. To the extent feasible, it is the Department's goal to maintain as many of the scheduled exams as possible. However, **we must make decisions based on whether it is possible to do so in a manner that does not conflict with Commonwealth recommendations and directives which are intended to prevent further spread of COVID-19.**

The Pennsylvania Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have restricted "large" group gatherings. This number continues to change and has been steadily reduced over the past week from "250" to "10" people. The Department must also consider the various restrictions on travel and non-essential business closings. Due to these restrictions, some examinations will need to be postponed and rescheduled at a later date.

The overall situation is unknown and the Department does not intend to apply restrictions in place today to examinations scheduled months into the future. Additionally, the Department does not plan to cancel or postpone exams without sufficient notice. In order to make timely decisions using current guidance from Commonwealth officials, the Department will evaluate each examination two weeks prior to the examination date.

Therefore, until further notice, the Department will implement the following approach prior to each operator certification exam:

1. Two weeks (14 calendar days / 10 business days) prior to each exam, administrators of water and wastewater operator exams should contact Laura Chambers, Board Secretary, (information provided below) to discuss the current situation.

2. At that time, current guidance on large group size, travel restrictions, availability of healthy proctors, whether the test venue is open, etc. will be considered to make a postponement decision.
3. If the exam will be postponed, the approved exam provider will provide written notice of the postponement as soon as possible to each examinee.

Please note that as the approved provider for the examination, you may choose to implement a more stringent or more proactive cancellation policy.

Please note that some operators may need to cancel last minute due to their health, or the health of a family member. They may be called upon to respond to COVID-19 related emergencies – such as staffing shortages – at their water or wastewater treatment facility. Therefore, we encourage liberal cancellation and reschedule policies during these challenging times. The Department will work with examination providers regarding reschedule dates for all postponed exams.

Certified operators are a critical resource. Thank you for your efforts to ensure our examinations move forward in a manner that does not compromise the health of this critical resource. Please contact Laura Chambers, Board Secretary, with your questions by email at lchambers@pa.gov or by phone at (717) 772-5158.