

PWEA Position Statement

Water and Wastewater Systems Operations Professionals

Certification and Training

Adopted by PWEA on August 14, 2014

Re-approved February 11, 2021

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 Pennsylvania Water Environment Association (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) and other agencies to adopt universal standards for the certification program. Water and/or wastewater systems operations professionals should obtain and demonstrate the appropriate knowledge, and abilities to properly operate and maintain water and/or wastewater treatment systems, as well as demonstrate sound ethical operations practices and promote environmental stewardship. 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).

Training and Continuing Education

PWEA advocates that Pennsylvania's certification program continue to require applicable continuing education hours as a condition of maintaining certification licenses. To be approved for certification, training should be relevant and applicable to the abilities and knowledge necessary for the level of certification. Training that is approved by the PADEP should be readily available to all certified water and wastewater systems operations professionals in a variety of delivery mechanisms, such as traditional classroom, web-based 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 to the extent practicable while not placing an undue burden on the water and/or wastewater systems operations professionals being certified or trained or on the facility owners. Additional federal support would 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 Water and 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 to promote the profession and generate interest. PWEA also encourages states and provinces to investigate the development of a new official title for certified operators (e.g., "Certified Water Quality Professional") as well as develop succession planning programs for recruitment and retention of water and/or wastewater professionals.