

Operator Certification Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: What is a licensed operator?

A1: A licensed operator is an individual holding any local title, designation, or job description who is on-site at a public water system a significant amount of time, although not necessarily full-time, and who has active involvement in and is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and effectiveness of the system. The licensed operator must hold a license issued by the Department that is equal or superior to the license required for the system.

Q2: What is a public water system?

A2: A public water system is a system for the provision to the public of water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances, if such system has at least 15 service connections or regularly serves an average of at least 25 individuals daily for at least 60 days out of the year.

Q3: What are the types of public water systems?

A3:

- 1) A public community water system serves at least 15 services connections used by year-round residents or regularly serves at least 25 year-round residents.
- 2) A public nontransient noncommunity water system is a public water system that is not a public community water system and regularly serves at least 25 of the same persons for more than six months in any given calendar year.
- 3) A public transient noncommunity water system is a public water system that is not a public community or a public nontransient noncommunity water system and serves at least 25 transient individuals for at least 60 days in any given calendar year.

[View further explanation on the types of public water systems.](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/watersupply/pdf/TypesPublicWaterSystems.pdf)

[\[http://www.state.nj.us/dep/watersupply/pdf/TypesPublicWaterSystems.pdf\]](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/watersupply/pdf/TypesPublicWaterSystems.pdf)

Q4: Which public water systems require a licensed operator?

A4: All public community and public nontransient noncommunity water systems and any systems using surface water require a licensed operator.

Q5: Why are public water systems required to have a licensed operator?

A5: In accordance with Federal guidelines, owners of all community and nontransient noncommunity water systems must place the direct supervision of their water system, including each treatment facility and/or distribution system, under the responsible charge of an operator(s) holding a valid certification equal to or greater than the classification of the treatment facility and/or distribution system. The New Jersey State regulations governing licensed operators can be found in N.J.A.C. 7:10A, Licensing of Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment System Operators. To view N.J.A.C. 7:10A, click [here](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/watersupply/NJAC7_10A.pdf) [http://www.state.nj.us/dep/watersupply/NJAC7_10A.pdf]. In addition to those licenses required for public water systems, N.J.A.C. 7:10A also requires licenses for public wastewater treatment systems (S), public wastewater collection systems (C or CN), and industrial wastewater treatment plants (N, NS, or NN).

Q6: What types of licenses are required?

A6:

- 1) As defined in the regulations, public water distribution systems require a W license. A public water distribution system is a system comprising structures which is a public community water system or a public nontransient noncommunity water system identified by a specific ID number pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water Act Regulations, N.J.A.C. 7:10, and which operating alone or with other structures, results in the derivation, conveyance (or transmission) or distribution of piped water for human consumption and domestic purposes.
- 2) Public water treatment systems require a T license. A public water treatment system is any structure or structures that deliver water into a public water distribution identified by a specific ID number pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water Act regulations, N.J.A.C. 7:10, and which subjects water, prior to use for potable purposes, to the addition or subtraction of a substance or substances in order to enhance the safeness, palatability, public health, purity, or aesthetic qualities; or reduce the corrosive or hazardous properties of the water used.
- 3) Very Small Water Systems require a VSWS license. A Very Small Water System is:
 - a. A public community water system, that serves 100 or fewer dwellings or properties, that does not use treatment; or

- b. A public nontransient noncommunity water system which does not use treatment or uses treatment in the form of disinfection, home style ion exchange units or any other treatment that does not require chemical addition, process adjustment, backwashing, media regeneration (for example, calcium carbonate filters, granular activated carbon, cartridge filters).

Q7: What are the different levels of each license?

A7: Licenses to operate public water treatment systems (T) and licenses to operate public water distribution systems (W) are classified as Class One, Two, Three or Four. Level One systems are the smallest and/or least complex and Level Four systems are the largest and/or most complex. A VSWS license is available for the smallest or least complex systems.

Q8: How are public water distribution systems (W) classified?

A8:

System Class	W1	W2	W3	W4
Population served or equivalent	101 or more connections and less than 1,500 people	1,501 to 15,000 people	15,001 to 50,000 people	50,001 or more people

Q9: How are public water treatment systems (T) classified?

A9: A public water treatment system that does not meet the definition of VSWS is classified according to a range of points assigned based on the size, water supply source, and treatment in use at the system. T systems are classified based on the point tables at N.J.A.C. 7:10A-1.14(b)2(ii) – Table I(T) and N.J.A.C. 7:10A-1.14(c)2 – Table II(T):

Table I (T)

System class	T1	T2	T3	T4
Range of points as determined under (c)2 below	30 or less	31 to 55	56 to 75	76 and greater

Table II (T)

Item/Unit	Points
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SIZE	
Population served, 1 pt per 10,000 or part thereof, 10 pts max, population divided by 10,000 to obtain number	# x 1
Peak month's production (average day), 10 pts max, 1 pt per mgd or part thereof, multiply mgd by 1	mgd x 1
WATER SUPPLY SOURCE	
Ground water	6
Ground water under direct influence of surface water	10
Surface water	22
TREATMENT	
Aeration (without packed column)	8
Chemical precipitation softening	20
Coagulation-flocculation with sedimentation	20
Coagulation-flocculation without sedimentation	10
Corrosion inhibitors	8
Disinfection with chlorine	8
Disinfection with chlorine dioxide	10
Disinfection with chloramines	10
Disinfection with ozone	15
Fluoridation	8
Filtration with membrane	15
Filtration with multimedia and/or gravity filters	15
Filtration with monomedia and/or pressure filters	10

Granular activated carbon (GAC)	15
Ion exchange	10
Ion exchange with degasser	15
Iron/Manganese removal employing oxidation	10
Iron/Manganese hardness sequestration	8
Packed column aeration (PCA)	15
Packed column aeration with granular activated carbon air pollution abatement	20
pH adjustment	8
Reverse osmosis or electrodialysis, etc.	15
Sludge (in plant) treatment with recycling	6
Taste and odor control (carbon or oxidants)	8

In addition, N.J.A.C. 7:10A-1.14(a)3 states that if unique treatment system conditions exist that are not set forth in the tables, the Department shall adjust the system classification by determining the unique conditions equivalent to a comparable factor in the tables and assigning points accordingly.

[View the entire text of N.J.A.C. 7:10A.](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/watersupply/NJAC7_10A.pdf)

[http://www.state.nj.us/dep/watersupply/NJAC7_10A.pdf]

Q10: How does an individual become certified?

A10: The individual must take and pass a State examination for the license sought. Criteria needed to take each exam consist of minimum education and experience requirements.

Q11: What are the minimum criteria needed to take a VSWS exam?

A11:

- 1) Possession of a high school diploma or equivalency certificate.
- 2) Completion of the 12-hour VSWS training course
- 3) Six months of documented operating experience at a public community or public nontransient noncommunity water system.

Q12: What are the minimum criteria needed to take a T or W exam?

A12:

- 1) Possession of a high school diploma or equivalency certificate.
- 2) For a Class One license, completion of the 180-hour “Introduction to Water and Wastewater Operations” training course (This course is not required for applicants possessing, at a minimum, an Associates Degree in an engineering or related science field or a Bachelors Degree in an unrelated field). For a Class Two license, completion of the 90-hour “Advanced Water Operations” training course is required.

[View a list of water/wastewater initial certification approved providers at the Examinations & Licensing Unit webpage.](http://www.nj.gov/dep/exams/wsw.htm)

[<http://www.nj.gov/dep/exams/wsw.htm>]

- 3) Meet the minimum experience requirements as follows:

Classification	Education	Operating experience (years)	Direct responsible charge experience (years)	Total experience (years)
Class 1	HS diploma or equiv:	1	0	1
	Associates degree:	1	0	1
	Bachelors degree:	1	0	1
Class 2	HS diploma or equiv:	3	0	3
	Associates degree:	2	0	2
	Bachelors degree:	1.5	0	1.5
Class 3	HS diploma or equiv:	3 plus	3	6
	Associates degree:	2 plus	2	4
	Bachelors degree:	1.5 plus	1.5	3
Class 4	HS diploma or equiv:	6 plus	4	10
	Associates degree:	4 plus	3	7
	Bachelors degree:	3 plus	2	5

Associates degree and Bachelors degree in table above refers to those obtained at an accredited college resulting in an engineering or related science degree.

Q13: What is operating experience?

A13: Operating experience means the time spent in the satisfactory performance of operational duties at a system which is acceptable to the Board of Examiners, which reviews exam applications on behalf of DEP.

Q14: What is direct responsible charge experience?

A14: Direct responsible charge experience means active, daily, on-site supervision, including operation and maintenance responsibilities in a system with a classification no less than one classification lower than the license sought. This experience shall be gained while in possession of a license no less than one grade lower than the license sought.

A15: When and where are examinations held?

A15: Examinations are normally held three times per year, typically in March, June, and October. Exams are held in the Trenton area. N.J.A.C. 7:10A requires that NJDEP hold examinations at least twice annually.

Q16: How do I apply for an examination?

A16: [Exam application forms](http://www.nj.gov/dep/exams/wsw.htm) [http://www.nj.gov/dep/exams/wsw.htm] may be obtained at the Examinations & Licensing Unit's webpage. Include documentation of High School diploma and completion of necessary appropriate signatory. The appropriate signatory is typically the licensed operator in charge at the system, but in some cases may be the system owner or administrator. Also include the necessary application fee. Applications submitted without the appropriate documentation and/or nonrefundable fee will be returned without substantive review. Applications must be postmarked or hand-delivered to the Examinations & Licensing Unit no later than February 15 for the March exam, May 15 for the June exam, and September 15 for the October exam.

Q17: What are the fees for water/wastewater operator licenses?

A17:

Application Fee	\$70.00*
Initial License Fee	\$50.00*
Annual License Fee	\$50.00
Late Renewal Fee	\$20.00

*Application and initial license fees are currently waived for VSWS licenses.

Q18: After taking an exam, how will I be notified of the results?

A18: Approximately 4 – 6 weeks after taking the exam, you will be notified if you have passed or failed. If you have passed, you will receive a bill for the initial license fee (except for VSWS). All examinees will receive an analysis of their test results. This analysis will show the number of correct/incorrect responses in each area of the exam. No one will be permitted to review the actual exams.

Q19: Does New Jersey grant reciprocity to out-of-state licenseholders?

A19: Individuals holding licenses issued by other State(s) may apply to New Jersey's Board of Examiners to be granted a New Jersey license. The applicant must meet the minimum NJ education and experience requirements for the license sought and have passed an examination that is deemed equivalent to a New Jersey exam. Also, New Jersey may only grant reciprocity for another State's license if that State grants reciprocity to New Jersey licensees. Please contact the Examinations & Licensing Unit at (609) 777-1013 if you require further information about this process.

Q20: How long are licenses valid?

A20: Licenses are valid from the date of issuance to September 30. Licenseholders may renew their license by submitting a complete renewal application with the nonrefundable annual license fee to:

N.J. Department of Environmental Protection
Examinations & Licensing Unit, General Services
P.O. Box 441
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0426

Renewal applications are typically mailed out in August each year. If you have not received your renewal application by the end of August, contact the Examinations & Licensing Unit at once at (609) 777-1013.

If a licenseholder fails to renew his license within one year following the renewal date of the license, he will not receive a license unless he meets the current requirements for the license and passes another qualifying examination.

Q21: What are the continuing education requirements for license renewal?

A21: Licenseholders must acquire Training Contact Hours (TCHs) in order to meet continuing education requirements for license renewal. The minimum number of TCHs specified for each license shall be acquired within fixed three-year periods. The periods are as follows:

October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2012
October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2015
October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2018
and every three years thereafter

The number of TCHs required every three years for each license is as follows:

<u>License Class</u>	<u>Training Contact Hours</u>
3 and 4	36
CN, NS, NN, 1 and 2	18
VSWS	12

Q22: What courses are acceptable for operator license renewal?

Q22: Only water-related courses are accepted for water licenses. Only wastewater-related courses are accepted for wastewater licenses. Some courses may be valid for both water and wastewater licenses.

- 1) Water/wastewater-related Continuing Education Units (CEUs) that adhere to the criteria set forth by the International Association of Continuing Education and Training (IACET) are accepted on the basis of 1 CEU = 10 TCHs. A list of IACET authorized providers is available at www.iacet.org
- 2) Training programs and courses that have been approved by NJDEP are accepted. These courses will have NJDEP course approval numbers.
[View a list of TCH continuing education providers](#)
[http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/pdf/course_continued.pdf]
- 3) Training courses that are co-sponsored by NJDEP-approved training program providers are valid for TCHs. These courses will have NJDEP course approval numbers.
- 4) College credit for courses which are directly relevant to the operation, maintenance or management of a wastewater or water system and which

address influences on water quality, public health or environmental protection will be issued 15 TCHs for each credit hour.

Q23: Are there other ways to acquire TCHs?

A23: Yes. Seven (7) TCHs are awarded for passing an examination in the appropriate field. Three (3) TCHs (maximum) are awarded for any Red Cross-conducted or sponsored First Aid or CPR course. One (1) TCH is awarded for each year or part thereof for membership in the New Jersey Section of the American Water Works Association (NJAWWA) for water licenses. One (1) TCH is awarded for each year or part thereof for membership in the New Jersey Water Environment Association (NJWEA) for wastewater licenses. One-half (0.5) TCH is awarded for each year or part thereof for membership in any other water/wastewater professional association recognized by the Advisory Committee. A maximum of three (3) TCHs may be applied for memberships as applicable for each license. Course instructors shall receive TCHs on an hour-per-hour basis toward the appropriate license(s).

Q24: Are there exceptions to the TCH requirements?

A24: Yes. No more than one-third of the required TCHs shall be granted for safety-related training. An individual that newly requires a license within a fixed three-year period is not required to obtain TCHs for license renewal. For new licensees, the TCH requirement will not take effect until the following three-year period. Licenseholders are only responsible for obtaining the number of TCHs required for their license(s) at the start of the three-year period. For example, a licensee that holds a T-2 license at the start of the three-year period and upgrades his license to a T-3 within the three-year period, will be required to obtain 18 TCHs, NOT 36 TCHs.

Q25: How do I notify DEP that I will no longer be serving as the licensed operator in charge at a system or that I am the new licensed operator at a system?

Complete and submit the DEP-065 form "Licensed Operator in Charge Employment Notification Form". This form is available on the [Examinations & Licensing Unit webpage](http://www.nj.gov/dep/exams/wsw.htm) [http://www.nj.gov/dep/exams/wsw.htm]. The form must be completed and signed by both the licensed operator and the system owner or administrator. Licensed operators shall notify DEP at least two weeks prior to changing positions or employment. The owner of a system employing a new licensed operator shall notify DEP within two weeks after the licensed operator begins his/her employment.

Q26: I have completed the Intro to Water & Wastewater Operations course and/or the Advanced Water Operations course? Am I eligible for reimbursement by DEP?

Please refer to the [fact sheet](#)

[<http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/dwreimbnotice.pdf>] to see if you meet the eligibility requirements. The appropriate forms needed to submit a reimbursement request are:

1. [Request for Reimbursement of Drinking Water Operator Certification Training Expenses](#)
[<http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/pdf/dwreimbform.pdf>]
2. [State of New Jersey Payment Voucher \(Vendor Invoice\) Form](#)
[<http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/pdf/pmtvoucher.pdf>],
3. [State of New Jersey W-9 Questionnaire Form](#)
[<http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/pdf/w-9.pdf>].

If you have any questions regarding this program, contact Joseph duRocher at (609) 292-5550.

Q27: I am a T licensed operator. Am I required to submit monthly operating reports?

A27: Yes. Submit the [Monthly Operating Report for Groundwater Treatment Plants \(Form BSDW-040\)](#) [<http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/bsdw40.xls>] or the [Monthly Operating Report for Surface Water Treatment Plants/GWUDISW \(Form BSDW-041\)](#) [<http://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/bsdw41.xls>], as applicable, no later than the 10th day following the month for which the data is collected. A separate report must be submitted for each treatment plant, even for those not in operation for the entire month. Daily results must be reported on the form. It is not a requirement that the licensed operator personally record daily results, but the licensed operator is required to sign and submit the form to DEP. If you have any questions regarding the submission or entry of data on reports, contact Joseph duRocher at (609) 292-5550.

Q28: I am a training provider of water/wastewater-related courses. How do I obtain approval from DEP?

A29: Complete and submit the [TCH provider application package](#) [<http://www.nj.gov/dep/exams/docs/TCH%20provider%20application%20packag>

e.pdf]. If you have any questions regarding the approval process, please contact Joseph duRocher at (609) 292-5550.