

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
SMALL WATER SYSTEM OPERATOR CERTIFICATION
(OAR 333-061-0228)

Who is required to have a small groundwater certification?

Any community or non-transient non-community water system which has less than 150 service connections and uses only groundwater as its source or a system that purchases its water from a public water system but does not treat it any further

Am I the operator?

You are if you are designated by the owner of the system to perform or be responsible for the day to day operation of the system which might include any of the following duties:

Operation & Maintenance of pumps and motors

Testing/sampling

Leak detection/repairs

Installation of taps/pipelines/service connections

How much does it cost to obtain a certificate?

There is no cost for the Small Water System operator certification.

How does a system get the operator certified?

Choose one of the following options:

1. The legal owner or a person authorized to speak on behalf of the system needs to decide who to designate as direct responsible charge (DRC) operator, They fill out the form and return it to the Drinking Water Program along with proof of having attended the Small Water Operator Training Course within the past three years. (The classes are listed on our website: <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/dwp/trngschd.shtml>. Information will be sent to all water systems in the county where a class will be held. Call to secure your place in the training, as these will fill up quickly.)
2. Take our distance-learning course and pass the associated test (Not available at this time but we hope to have it ready by fall '07.)

There are many types of training. What counts toward SWSO Certification?

The only training, which will be accepted for this certification, is the Drinking Water Program's Small Water System Operator Training Course. This a free class offered around the state from February through November. See our website for upcoming sessions in your area.

How long is the certificate valid?

Certificates are valid for a period of 3 years, expiring July 31 of the third year.

How do I renew?

We'll send a notice at the beginning of the year to all those whose certificates expires July 31 of that year. If you've taken the class once since your certification, you can use that certificate to renew for another three years. Otherwise, you'll need to plan to attend the course before it expires.

What happens if I don't send in an application?

You won't be certified and your system will be considered out of compliance, which may result in a fine or cause difficulty in mortgage loan transactions for any properties on the system.

How many people can be certified as operators for my system?

Only one is required but you can have as many as you want. It is a good idea to have more than one person certified for a water system. When you want more than two (as on the application), just photocopy the application and designate Operator #3, #4, and so forth.

Our people rotate, whom do I certify?

Designate whoever has rotated to the operator in Direct Responsible Charge position (DRC).

If I move on to another system, is my certificate transferable?

No. The certificate is site-specific and is not transferable. You can re-apply for certification at the new system.

Can I operate several small systems and still be certified at all of them?

Yes, but a separate certification is required for each small water system.

We have a lab do all our work. I only make repairs. Can the lab be certified?

A lab cannot be certified as an operator. Only a person can be certified.

I took the training class but can't find my certificate. What can I do?

Complete the application checking the "Water Operator Training" box, and fill in the date and the city where you attended. When we receive the application, we will try to verify attendance with our registration lists from the class.

Can we still use a contract operator?

Yes. Contracting with a certified operator is an acceptable way to achieve compliance. Complete the information requested on the form. The contract operator must have a current Oregon certificate in Water Distribution or Water Treatment.

How difficult is the training class?

The training is very basic, need-to-know information designed specifically for small water systems. There is no test - only attendance is required. You'll receive a manual and have the opportunity to ask questions of experts and other operators.

My operator passed away. Can I take the training class now and get certified?

Certainly. This is a good example of why you should have more than one operator listed as the responsible charge of the system.

What if the owner has a property management company in charge?

If a property management company operates the system, the owner still needs to designate someone for certification.

Can I get a list of certified operators?

Check with your local community water systems for a list of available operators, or advertise for a certified operator in your area. An operator should be able to show you a card indicating his name, certification number, certification level and date of expiration. You may also call the Operator Certification Program (971-673-0426 or 971-673-0413) to verify certification of an operator.