

**Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (DWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – November 17, 2025**

Meeting Date: Monday, November 17, 2025

Attendees: Advisory Committee Members

Jack Bebee, Bryan Miller, Doug Culbert, Jose Martinez, Jose J. Martinez, Ian Tillery, Mike Maestas, Sean Abbey, Derek Nguyen, John Hamner

State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board)

Josh Ziese, Keisha Kelley, Valerie Gregory, Sarah Miller, Antonio Aguilar, Andrew Cline, Julie Osborne, Helen Wuellner, Stefan Cajina, Bryan Elder, Sahand Rastegarpour

Public

Sue Mosburg, Jon Conover, S. Murphy

Item 1 – Introductions

- Keisha Kelley, OOC Program Manager, acted as moderator for this meeting. The meeting was held via Video/Teleconference and in person at the California Environmental Protection Agency building located at 1001 I Street, Sacramento, California 95814.

Item 2 – Agenda Review

- Keisha Kelley reviewed the agenda and proceeded as scheduled with a reminder that the meeting is being recorded for note taking purposes only and will be deleted after meeting minutes are prepared.

Item 3 – Public Comments

- Jon Conover, City of Sacramento, made a suggestion for the OOC to implement an expedited processing service of renewals for an additional fee. This service would be reserved for operators who submitted their renewals at the last minute and are at risk of their certifications expiring.
 - Advisory Committee members responded that accountability is on the operator to submit their renewals timely.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (DWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – November 17, 2025

- OOC reminded the Advisory Committee and public that electronic drinking water renewal applications are in development, which will assist operators in submitting renewal applications.
- Sue Mosburg, CA-NV AWWA, made positive remarks regarding how helpful the drinking water guidance document posted on the DWOCP website is and recommends OOC creates something similar for continuing education and specialized training providers.

Item 4 – Office of Enforcement (OE) Updates

- Bryan Elder, OE, Special Investigations Manager, discussed what enforcement at the State Water Boards generally consists of and provided a general overview of the recent reorganization of OE. While the majority of staff were maintained, the Unit Supervisor has transitioned to Erin Garner.
- No data regarding open, closed, or pending enforcement matters was presented.

Item 5 – DWOCP Updates

- Advisory Committee vacancies
 - The DWOCP Advisory Committee had 1 vacancy for a person from a Local Primacy Agency.
 - On October 10, 2025, the State Water Board, appointed Sean Abbey. His term expires on June 30, 2027.
- Staffing Update
 - No changes to staffing. The DWOCP remains fully staffed.
 - Processing times have remained consistently within the DWOCP's policy of 45-days.
- Program statistics (Attachment A)
 - Attachment A was reviewed with the Advisory Committee.
 - Although the examination pass rates are consistent with historical pass rates, the Advisory Committee inquired about the availability of more detailed exam performance data. The OOC will prepare a more detailed report of exam data including exam categories and how examinees are scoring in each category.
- Online Application Portal
 - The OOC, in coordination with the State Water Board's Division of Information Technology, has continued development of an interactive online application portal to allow applicants the ability to submit applications electronically, review and resolve application deficiencies and track application status.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (DWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – November 17, 2025

- As of February 2025, examination applications for all disciplines and grades can be submitted electronically on OCIS portal.
 - This past summer the ability to submit wastewater renewal applications electronically through the OCIS portal went live.
 - Currently, the OOC is working with the State Water Boards Division of Information Technology on the development of electronic drinking water renewal applications. Drinking water renewals have a continuing education requirement and development of the electronic renewal application is more complex than wastewater. However, the team has been diligent, and we anticipate launching drinking water renewal applications by the end of the calendar year.
 - Development of electronic certification applications will begin following the completion of the electronic renewal application phase.
- Customer Service Survey
 - The semi-annual customer service survey results were provided to the Advisory Committee members and stakeholders via email in September of this calendar year.
 - The survey results cover the 6-month period of March 2025 through August 2025.
 - There were 14 respondents total for this survey period and the weighted average for overall experience with the OOC was 3.5 out of 5.
 - Respondents are not required to provide a response to every question; they may skip questions and are given the opportunity to provide additional comments or suggestions to improve the program and leave their contact information. Respondents that leave contact information are contacted by the OOC to address and resolve any issues, if applicable.
 - Survey results covering the 6-month period of September 2025 through February 2026 will be provided to the Advisory Committee members and stakeholders via email in March 2026.
- AB1588 (Veteran Reciprocity)
 - The OOC has continued to evaluate opportunities to issue operator certifications by reciprocity to persons who performed duties comparable to the duties of an operator while serving in the United States (U.S.) Military. As well as opportunities to award experience and education credits to persons who performed duties of an operator while serving in the U.S. Military. Continued efforts have focused primarily on drinking water operators, the OOC with the assistance of Jose J. Martinez was able to consult with the Navy, the Marines and the Air Force.
 - Attempts to consult with the Army were unsuccessful. Information about operations in the Army comes from discovery through review of their website and documents submitted by operators.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (DWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – November 17, 2025

- Attempts to consult with the Coast Guard were also unsuccessful, however there are no water operator or related positions listed on the Coast Guard's recruitment website.
 - Drinking water operations in the Navy are split between overseas and AFLOAT. For overseas facilities the Navy certifies Drinking Water Distribution and Treatment Operators, grades 1, 2, and 3 for both disciplines, and there is a continuing education requirement to maintain certification.
 - The Navy AFLOAT, the Marines, the Army, and the Air Force do not have drinking water certification programs. These branches provide training courses as well as on-the-job training, which may or may not include post-course examinations and the issuance of a certificate of completion.
 - The OOC has issued operator certifications by reciprocity to persons holding a valid certification issued by the Navy overseas Operator Certification Program.
 - The U.S. Army Quartermaster College Water Treatment Specialist Program is accredited by the U.S. Department of Education and may be used for education substitution toward part of the required experience requirement for both distribution and treatment certifications, for grades 3 – 5.
 - The OOC is also consulting with various states and inquiring if they have awarded drinking water operator certifications by reciprocity to persons who performed duties comparable to the duties of an operator while serving in the U.S. Military as well as inquiring how they award experience and education credits to persons who perform duties of an operator while serving in the U.S. Military.
- Regulatory Updates
 - The initial outline is still in process, tentatively plan to have it ready for the Spring Advisory Committee meeting.

Item 6 – T5 Oral Exam

- T5 Oral Exam
 - At the Fall 2024 Advisory Committee meeting a recommendation was made by an Advisory Committee member to convert the Grade 5 treatment examination from an oral examination to computer based. During the discussion at that meeting and the following meeting, a consensus amongst the Advisory Committee was not reached.
 - T5 Oral Exam Presentation (Attachment B)
 - The OOC's technical advisor, Sahand Rastegarpour, gave a presentation on the current T5 oral exam process including the structure and objective of the exam.

Office of Operator Certification (OOC)
Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (DWOCP) Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – November 17, 2025

- A discussion continued regarding potential changes to the format of the exam. A consensus amongst the Advisory Committee was not reached at the meeting. At the request of the Advisory Committee a sub-work group of a limited number of Advisory Committee members and appropriate State Water Board staff will be formed to work towards consensus and a recommendation to be presented at a future Advisory Committee meeting.

Meeting Recap

- The OOC will reach out via email no later than January to begin scheduling the next meeting for the Spring.

Drinking Water Operator Certification Program
November 17, 2025, Advisory Committee Meeting

Statistics

| DISTRIBUTION | | |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | 2024 1/1/2024-6/30/2024 | 2025 1/1/2025-6/30/2025 |
| Applications received (exam, cert, renewals) | 6,959 | 6,752 |
| Certificates issued (new and renewals) | 3,569 | 3,093 |

| TREATMENT | | |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | 2024 1/1/2024-6/30/2024 | 2025 1/1/2025-6/30/2025 |
| Applications received (exam, cert, renewals) | 4,183 | 4,574 |
| Certificates issued (new and renewals) | 2,202 | 2,351 |

| DISTRIBUTION - NUMBER OF VALID CERTIFICATES | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Grade | Jan 2025 | Feb 2025 | Mar 2025 | Apr 2025 | May 2025 | June 2025 |
| 1 | 4,014 | 4,013 | 3,995 | 3,947 | 3,925 | 3,952 |
| 2 | 9,883 | 9,884 | 9,846 | 9,840 | 9,690 | 9,751 |
| 3 | 4,278 | 4,274 | 4,270 | 4,283 | 4,291 | 4,289 |
| 4 | 1,943 | 1,928 | 1,915 | 1,924 | 1,916 | 1,920 |
| 5 | 1,272 | 1,268 | 1,263 | 1,274 | 1,270 | 1,274 |
| Total | 21,395 | 21,371 | 21,293 | 21,271 | 21,094 | 21,188 |

| TREATMENT - NUMBER OF VALID CERTIFICATES | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Grade | Jan 2025 | Feb 2025 | Mar 2025 | Apr 2025 | May 2025 | June 2025 |
| 1 | 2,472 | 2,447 | 2,418 | 2,419 | 2,404 | 2,405 |
| 2 | 8,639 | 8,617 | 8,584 | 8,609 | 8,632 | 8,573 |
| 3 | 2,000 | 2,006 | 2,005 | 2,019 | 2,031 | 2,035 |
| 4 | 1,087 | 1,086 | 1,082 | 1,076 | 1,079 | 1,080 |
| 5 | 530 | 528 | 527 | 522 | 529 | 529 |
| Total | 14,729 | 14,685 | 14,617 | 14,646 | 14,675 | 14,622 |

**Treatment Grade 5 examinations are oral exams administered twice a year
(Not conducted via computer-based testing)**

| TREATMENT GRADE 5 ORAL EXAM PASS/FAIL Reporting Period: Winter 2024 2/5/2024 (South) and 2/12/2024 (North) | | | | |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Grade | Examinees | Pass Count | Fail Count | Pass Percent |
| Treat. Grade 5 | 37 | 16 | 21 | 43% |

| TREATMENT GRADE 5 ORAL EXAM PASS/FAIL Reporting Period: Winter 2025 2/17/2025 – 2/21/2025 (South) and 2/24/2025 – 2/28/2025 (North) | | | | |
|---|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Grade | Examinees | Pass Count | Fail Count | Pass Percent |
| Treat. Grade 5 | 25 | 9 | 16 | 36% |

| COMPUTER-BASED TESTING PASS/FAIL Reporting Period 1/1/2024- 6/30/2024 | | | | |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Grade | Examinees | Pass Count | Fail Count | Pass Percent |
| Dist. Grade 1 | 571 | 350 | 221 | 61% |
| Dist. Grade 2 | 899 | 598 | 301 | 67% |
| Dist. Grade 3 | 343 | 222 | 121 | 65% |
| Dist. Grade 4 | 145 | 88 | 57 | 61% |
| Dist. Grade 5 | 85 | 50 | 35 | 59% |
| | | | | |
| Treat. Grade 1 | 291 | 188 | 103 | 65% |
| Treat. Grade 2 | 657 | 416 | 241 | 63% |
| Treat. Grade 3 | 170 | 120 | 50 | 70% |
| Treat. Grade 4 | 62 | 41 | 21 | 66% |

| COMPUTER-BASED TESTING PASS/FAIL Reporting Period 1/1/2025- 6/30/2025 | | | | |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Grade | Examinees | Pass Count | Fail Count | Pass Percent |
| Dist. Grade 1 | 590 | 382 | 208 | 65% |
| Dist. Grade 2 | 928 | 586 | 342 | 63% |
| Dist. Grade 3 | 379 | 232 | 147 | 61% |
| Dist. Grade 4 | 162 | 99 | 63 | 61% |
| Dist. Grade 5 | 73 | 38 | 35 | 52% |
| | | | | |
| Treat. Grade 1 | 300 | 170 | 130 | 57% |
| Treat. Grade 2 | 649 | 400 | 249 | 62% |
| Treat. Grade 3 | 179 | 114 | 65 | 64% |
| Treat. Grade 4 | 69 | 32 | 37 | 46% |

Drinking Water Operator Certification Program - Statistics
November 17, 2025, Advisory Committee Meeting

| CUMULATIVE COMPUTER-BASED TESTING PASS/FAIL | | | | |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Reporting Period: 2/20/2021 (CBT Inception) – 6/30/2025 | | | | |
| Grade | Examinees | Pass Count | Fail Count | Pass Percent |
| Dist. Grade 1 | 4,516 | 2,917 | 1,599 | 65% |
| Dist. Grade 2 | 7,556 | 4,972 | 2,584 | 66% |
| Dist. Grade 3 | 3,018 | 1,871 | 1,147 | 62% |
| Dist. Grade 4 | 1,395 | 798 | 597 | 57% |
| Dist. Grade 5 | 644 | 367 | 277 | 57% |
| | | | | |
| Treat. Grade 1 | 2,257 | 1,375 | 882 | 61% |
| Treat. Grade 2 | 5,194 | 3,324 | 1,870 | 64% |
| Treat. Grade 3 | 1,487 | 969 | 518 | 65% |
| Treat. Grade 4 | 617 | 369 | 248 | 60% |

Grade 5 Water Treatment Exam

Drinking Water Operator Certification
Program – Division of Financial
Assistance



Agenda



Exam Guidelines



Exam Structure and Objective



Exam Process and Walkthrough



Questions



The Basics

Minimum Qualifications



Valid T4 certification

Minimum of 4 courses
of specialized training
(w/ 2 in drinking water treatment)

- Highest exam level for Treatment Operators
- Offered twice a year in Southern and Northern California



Exam Structure and Objective



Exam Format

Oral Exam

6 Questions, 30 minutes

Scored as Pass or Fail



Objective

Demonstrate knowledge required to be a T5 operator

Demonstrate ability to administer treatment plant of:

- Any size
- Any type
- Any location across California

Exam Content

The exam consists of 2 questions from each category for a total of 6 questions.



Regulatory

To evaluate knowledge of the regulations



Utility Management and Emergency Situations

To evaluate supervisory and managerial skills

To evaluate ability to handle emergencies



Operational

To evaluate knowledge of water treatment

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Exam Process and Walkthrough

What to Expect: Application Process

- Must submit a complete exam application postmarked by the final filing date
- Prior to the exam, approved applicants are mailed the following:
 - Approval letter with exam instructions including, the date, time, and location of their exam
 - Confidentiality form
 - Informational document to prepare them for the exam

Informational Document

- Exam objective
- Exam format
- Detailed exam overview, such as:
 - ✓ Detailed instruction on how to approach answering the questions
 - ✓ Detailed information on exam content

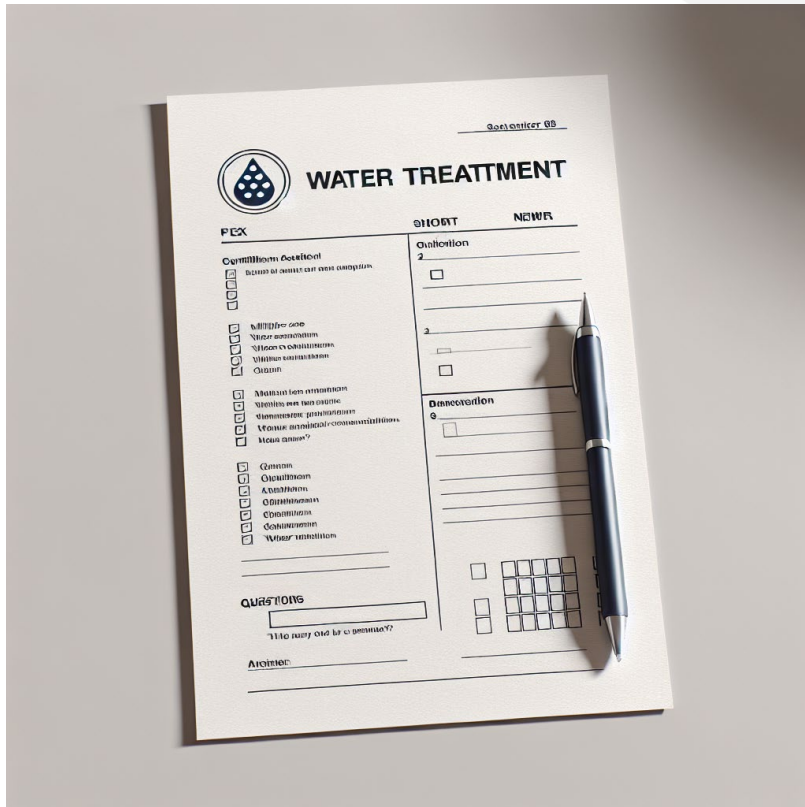
What to Expect: Day of Exam

The exam candidate is greeted outside the exam room

- Bring:
 - Approval letter
 - Confidentiality form
 - ID
- Phones and additional paper/documents are not permitted into the exam room
- Escorted into waiting room, then into exam room



What to Expect: During Exam



- Intro script will be read to the candidate
- Panel member* introductions
 - 2 - Current T5 Operators
 - 1 - DDW District Engineer
- Candidate introduction
- Opportunity for candidate to ask questions
- Exam begins
 - Panelists take turns asking each question
 - Panelists take notes
 - Proctor acts as time-keeper

*Back-up panelists: An additional DDW District Engineer or the Proctor (DWOCF Technical Advisor)

What to Expect: After the Exam

- At the exam conclusion the candidate is escorted out of the exam room
- Scoring - Panelists discuss and evaluate the candidates answers
 - Each panelist shall mark *pass* or *fail* on the grading sheet
 - Fails must be substantiated in writing by the panel member
- **2/3 passes** are required to pass the exam
- Exam results are mailed approximately 2-3 weeks after the exam
 - **Pass:** Exam results valid for up to 3 years
 - **Fail:** Receive feedback in the form of standard comments indicating the categories for which the candidate provided incorrect answers.



QUESTIONS

