

## WHAT IS A CONTRACT OPERATOR?

A contract operator is an individual or entity that enters into a contract with an owner to operate one or more wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs). Contract operators may be utilized to staff an entire WWTP. Alternatively, they may be used solely for supervisory or consulting use, or for filling operator vacancies at a WWTP as needed.

## CONTRACT OPERATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Within 30 days after entering into a contract to operate a WWTP, a contract operator must submit an application and applicable fee for contract operator registration to the Wastewater Operator Certification Program (WWOCP). Contract operators must obtain a contract operator credential for each WWTP under contract.
- Post the contract operator credential for each WWTP in a publically accessible area. If there is no publicly accessible available, the credential must be posted at the WWTP's owners headquarters. Operators, provisional operators, and operators-in-training (OITs) must also post their current certificates.
- Ensure that the operators employed by the contract operator or under the contract operator's supervision hold valid, unexpired WWTP operator certificates issued by the WWOCP. If an uncertified operator works in wastewater operations, the State Water Board may impose disciplinary action and/or administrative civil liability against the owner, the contract operator, the chief plant operator (CPO), and the uncertified operator.
- Notify the WWOCP in writing within 30 days of any final disciplinary action that the contract operator takes against an operator, provisional operator, or OIT.
- Comply with the WWOCP regulations (California Code of Regulations, title 23, division 3, chapter 26, section 3670 et seq), the applicable Waste Discharge Requirements regulating discharge from the WWTP, and the applicable provisions of the Water Code. The WWOCP regulations are located at: [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/operator\\_certification/docs/ocr\\_clear.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/operator_certification/docs/ocr_clear.pdf)

## RENEWAL OF CONTRACT OPERATOR REGISTRATION

Contract operator registrations are issued for a one-year period. At least 60 days prior to the expiration of the registration, the WWOCP will send a written notification advising the contract operator of their registration expiration date. Renewal applications must be received 30 days prior to the expiration date in order to avoid a \$100.00 late fee.

## ADD WWTP OR OPERATOR TO AN EXISTING REGISTRATION

Within 30 days after a registered contract operator contracts with additional WWTP(s), the contract operator must submit an Application for Additional Contract Operator Credential. There is a \$50.00 fee for each new WWTP. This application is available on the website under "Forms" or at: [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/operator\\_certification/docs/forms/conop\\_credential.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/operator_certification/docs/forms/conop_credential.pdf)

## REPLACEMENT REGISTRATION/CREDENTIAL

A lost, stolen, damaged, or destroyed contract operator registration or credential may be replaced by the WWOCP. The contract operator must submit a signed statement explaining the circumstances of the loss, theft, damage, or destruction of the credential and submit the \$50.00 replacement fee.

## WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT OWNER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Comply with the WWOCP regulations (California Code of Regulations, title 23, division 3, chapter 26, section 3670 et seq), the applicable Waste Discharge Requirements regulating discharge from the WWTP, and the applicable provisions of the Water Code. This includes ensuring that all operators hold a valid, unexpired WWTP operator certificates issued by the WWOCP and ensuring that the CPO and, if applicable, the contract operator follow all WWOCP requirements and that they have the necessary resources to properly operate the WWTP.
- Submit a signed CPO Acknowledgement Form to the WWOCP from the CPO within 30 days of a change in CPO. The form is available on the website under "Forms" or at: [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/operator\\_certification/docs/forms/cpo\\_acknowledgement.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/operator_certification/docs/forms/cpo_acknowledgement.pdf)

- Notify the WWOCP regarding any modifications, including process changes at a WWTP by submitting a Plant Classification Form, available on the WWOCP's webpage under "Forms" or at: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/operator\\_certification/docs/forms/plantclassification.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/operator_certification/docs/forms/plantclassification.pdf)
- Notify the WWOCP in writing within 30 days of entering into or ending a contract with a contract operator (section 3676 (f)).
- Develop standard operator procedures (SOPs) to ensure all operators use reasonable care and judgment in operations, maintenance, and compliance of the plant including:
  - ❖ Operator SOPs: short, clear and concise step-by-step procedures for operators, to be used on a daily and/or weekly basis by operators for ensuring consistent work tasks at the plant.
  - ❖ Reference SOPs: narrative descriptions for operators, to be used covering operational and maintenance requirements for the plant - major treatment unit processes.
- Notify the WWOCP in writing within 30 days of any final disciplinary action taken by the owner against a contract operator or operator (section 3676 (g))

## CHIEF PLANT OPERATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Operate the WWTP in compliance with the WWOCP regulations, the applicable Waste Discharge Requirements regulating discharge from the WWTP, and the applicable provisions of the Water Code.
- Ensure that all operators hold a valid, unexpired WWTP operator certificates issued by the WWOCP and that all operator certificates and, if applicable, contract operator credentials are posted as required.
- Ensure direct supervision of OITs - a certified operator at the same or higher-grade level as the OIT must oversee and inspect the work performed by an OIT. Adequate training must be provided to ensure the safe and proper operation and maintenance of the WWTP.
- Sign certification applications for OITs and operators employed at the WWTP. By signing these applications, the CPO is verifying that the employment information provided is true and correct to the best of the CPO's knowledge.

- Return each OIT's certificate to the WWOCP at the ends of their training, along with the documentation stating the total number of hours worked in wastewater operations. CPOs may utilize the OIT Qualifying Experience Form, available on the website under "Forms" at: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/operator\\_certification/docs/forms/oit\\_qualifying\\_experience.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/operator_certification/docs/forms/oit_qualifying_experience.pdf)
- The CPO must appoint a qualified Designated Operator-In-Charge (DOIC) pursuant to section 3680 (b) of WWOCP regulations. The DOIC acts as the CPO when the CPO is unable to carry out the responsibilities of the position. DOIC appointments must be properly documented in the SOPs, organization charts, and duty rosters. The DOIC work details including timeframe for coverage at the WWTP should be documented in the WWTP's logbooks.



### NEED TO KNOW

The WWOCP may refuse to renew a contract operator registration if it determines that the applicant has operated a WWTP with an expired contract operator registration, or has committed any other violation.

All current contract operators that hold a valid, unexpired registration are listed on the WWOCP website active list, located under Certifications and Contract Operators:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/operator\\_certification/docs/conoplist.pdf](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/operator_certification/docs/conoplist.pdf)

### DISCIPLINARY ACTION REQUIREMENTS

If a WWTP owner or a contract operator issues a disciplinary action against an operator, provisional operator, or an OIT, is the owner or contract operator required to report it to the WWOCP? WWTP owners and contract operators are required to provide written notification to the WWOCP within thirty (30) days of taking any final disciplinary action against an operator, provisional operator, or OIT. Disciplinary action includes reprimanding or placing on probation, suspending, demoting, or discharging the individual for performing, allowing or causing another to perform any violation of the WWOCP regulations and/or applicable provisions of the Water Code. It is not necessary to report disciplinary actions that do not have any bearing on the operation of the WWTP, such as a DUI or sexual harassment. The notice must include the name of the individual, the individual's certificate number, the specific violation(s), and the final disciplinary action taken.

Any person (e.g., a CPO, operator, OIT, or member of the public) who has reason to suspect a violation of the WWOCP regulations and/or the applicable provisions of the Water Code is encouraged to contact the Office of Enforcement directly at (916) 327-8363 or [siu@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:siu@waterboards.ca.gov). Reports can be made anonymously.

For more information, please see sections 3676(g) and 3719.10(a) of the WWOCP regulations. If you have any questions regarding reporting disciplinary actions call (916) 341-5648 or email at [wwopcertprogram@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:wwopcertprogram@waterboards.ca.gov).

FOR ADDITIONAL BROCHURES, INFORMATION AND PROGRAM UPDATES VISIT THE WASTEWATER OPERATOR CERTIFICATION WEBSITE AT:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/operator\\_certification/operator\\_certification.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/operator_certification/operator_certification.shtml)

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

State Water Resources Control Board  
Wastewater Operator Certification

P.O. Box 944212

Sacramento, CA 94244-2120

Main Telephone: (916) 341-5819

Fax: (916) 341-5734

Email: [wwopcertprogram@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:wwopcertprogram@waterboards.ca.gov)



Office of  
Operator  
Certification

Wastewater Treatment Plant  
Operator Certification Program

### CONTRACT OPERATOR RESPONSIBILITIES



CALIFORNIA  
Water Boards  
STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD  
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARDS