

Rules Governing Certification for
WATER DISTRIBUTION OPERATORS & ASSOCIATES

Revised October 2009

- 1. Definitions** - The terms defined hereby apply explicitly to the California-Nevada Section of the American Water Works Association (CA-NV Section) Water Distribution Operators & Associates Certification Program.
 - 1.1. Administrator** - The CA-NV Section volunteer evaluating applications, administering examinations, issuing certificates, and performing associated duties.
 - 1.2. Applicant** - An individual applying for initial, upgraded, reciprocity or renewal by submission of a standard application to the administrator.
 - 1.3. Associate** - An individual that meets the minimum qualifications as defined in Section 2 and Section 4 of these rules.
 - 1.4. Certificate** - A certificate issued by the CA-NV Section AWWA attesting that an individual has met the standards of certification as they relate to water Distribution operation.
 - 1.5. Certification Director** - The person appointed by the Governing Board of the Section to represent the certification programs.
 - 1.6. Certification Grade (Associate)** - The level of certification as Grade I, II, III, or IV, as defined herein, corresponding to an individual's degree of knowledge as it relates to the operation/supervision of a public water Distribution system.
 - 1.7. Certification Grade (Operator)** - The level of certification as Grade I, II, III, or IV, as defined herein, corresponding to an individual's degree of knowledge, experience, and responsibility in the operation/supervision of a public water Distribution system.
 - 1.8. Committee** - The CA-NV Section AWWA Water Distribution/Treatment Certification Committee as appointed and administered by the Section via the Certification Board and charged with implementing the program(s) described herein.
 - 1.9. Contact Hour** - A minimum 50 minutes of actual time an attendee participates in continuing education offered by an approved provider on a public water supply related topic.
 - 1.10. Continuing Education (including contact hours)** - Presentations given by an accepted provider that transmits information related to the operation and/or maintenance of a drinking water treatment plant and/or distribution system.
 - 1.11. Course of Instruction** – A course of instruction acceptable to the Administrator provided by a formally accredited and/or standardized institution (e.g. institutions accredited/standardized by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges [WASC]) or the International Association for Continuing Education and Training [IACET]). The course may include, but is not limited to, instruction on the operation, maintenance, and/or management of public water supply systems including water treatment, water distribution, and/or water quality. Courses must be at least 3.6 CEUs (36 contact hours) over a minimum of 3 weeks.

1.12. Manager/Assistant Manager/Superintendent- The employee of water agency with the ultimate administrative and operational responsibility for its water Distribution system, and the immediate subordinate in charge in his/her absence. Manager shall not ordinarily apply to an official exercising only general administrative supervision, such as a City Engineer or Public Works Director.

1.13. Operator - An individual that meets the minimum qualifications as defined in Section 2 and Section 3 of these rules.

1.14. Section - The California-Nevada Section of the American Water Works Association (AWWA).

1.15. Supervisor - The employee of a public water purveyor who has the responsibility of supervising operators.

1.16. Waiver - A release from certain requirements granted by the Certification Director as allowed for under specific sections of these Rules.

1.17. Water Distribution System - Facilities for collecting, conveying, storing, pumping, controlling, disinfecting, and distributing drinking water.

1.18. Water Treatment System - Structures, equipment, and processes that treat or condition a water supply, affecting the physical, chemical, or bacteriological quality of water distributed or otherwise offered to the public for domestic use by a public water system. Facilities consisting of only disinfection for which no Giardia or virus reduction is required and which are under the control of a certified distribution operator do not qualify as water treatment.

2. GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS

2.1. Operators and Associates Certified under this program must:

- (a)** Be able to comprehend the English language to the extent that effective communications can be held with co-workers and supervisors
- (b)** Have attained his/her 18th birthday

3. OPERATOR QUALIFICATIONS (Minimum)

3.1. Grade I Water Distribution Operator - Job Description (typical) – An employee of a water purveyor who directly operates or is training to operate a drinking water treatment system

- (a)** Experience – Six (6) months operating a water Distribution system
- (b)** Education – High school diploma or GED equivalent
- (c)** Course of Instruction – Satisfactory completion of one (1) Course of Instruction as defined in Section 1.11 of these rules
- (d)** Successful completion of the Grade I Water Distribution examination

- 3.2. Grade II Water Distribution Operator** - Job Description (typical) – An employee of a water purveyor who directly operates and/or supervises the operation of a drinking water treatment system. Typically operates as a journeyman operator or first-line supervisor (e.g. lead-man, foreman, etc.)
- (a) Experience – Two (2) years operating a water Distribution system, one (1) year of which as a Certified Grade I Operator for a Distribution I facility or higher
 - (b) Education – High school diploma or GED equivalent
 - (c) Course of Instruction – Satisfactory completion of two (2) Courses of Instruction as defined in Section 1.11 of these rules
 - (d) Successful completion of the Grade II Water Distribution examination
- 3.3. Grade III Water Distribution Operator** - Job Description (typical) – An employee of a water purveyor who directly operates and/or supervises the operation of a drinking water treatment system. Typically operates as the system supervisor (e.g. field supervisor, superintendent, chief operator, assistant manager)
- (a) Experience – Four years experience in operation/supervision of a water Distribution system, one (1) year of which as a Certified Grade II Operator for a Distribution II facility or higher
 - (b) Education – High school diploma or GED equivalent
 - (c) Course of Instruction – Satisfactory completion of three (3) Courses of Instruction as defined in Section 1.11 of these rules
 - (d) Successful completion of the Grade III Water Distribution examination
- 3.4. Grade IV Water Distribution Operator** - Job Description (typical) – An employee of a water purveyor who supervises and/or manages the operation of a drinking water Distribution system. Typically operates as the system manager (e.g. superintendent, chief operator, assistant manager, manager)
- (a) Experience- Five (5) years experience in supervision/operation of a water Distribution system, two (2) years of which as a Certified Grade III Operator for a Distribution III facility or higher
 - (b) Education – High school diploma or GED equivalent
 - (c) Course of Instruction – Satisfactory completion of four (4) Courses of Instruction as defined in Section 1.11 of these rules
 - (d) Successful completion of the Grade IV Water Distribution examination

4. ASSOCIATE QUALIFICATIONS (Minimum)

4.1. Grade I Water Distribution Associate

- (a) Education – High school diploma or GED equivalent
- (b) Course of Instruction – Satisfactory completion of one (1) Course of Instruction as defined in Section 1.11 of these rules
- (c) Successful completion of the Grade I Water Distribution examination

4.2. Grade II Water Distribution Associate

- (a) Education – High school diploma or GED equivalent
- (b) Course of Instruction – Satisfactory completion of two (2) Courses of Instruction as defined in Section 1.11 of these rules
- (c) Successful completion of the Grade II Water Distribution examination

4.3. Grade III Water Distribution Associate

- (a) Education – High school diploma or GED equivalent
- (b) Course of Instruction – Satisfactory completion of three (3) Courses of Instruction as defined in Section 1.11 of these rules
- (c) Successful completion of the Grade III Water Distribution examination

4.4. Grade IV Water Distribution Associate

- (a) Education – High school diploma or GED equivalent
- (b) Course of Instruction – Satisfactory completion of four (4) Courses of Instruction as defined in Section 1.11 of these rules
- (c) Successful completion of the Grade IV Water Distribution examination

5. GENERAL CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE (Timelines in 5.1 and 5.2 are guidelines and, if missed, will not affect the validity of the action to which they refer)

- 5.1.** Applicants for certification, upgrade, or reciprocity must submit a completed application, as available from the Section Office for evaluation at least thirty (20) days prior to the date set for the examination. Applicants shall be notified of the time and place of the examination at least twenty (20) days prior to the date of the examination.
- 5.2.** Applicants will be notified up to thirty (30) working days of passage or failure of the examination. Upon passage, applicant is considered to be certified by the CA-NV Section of the AWWA.

- 5.3. Wallet cards for any grade are valid for two years from the date of issuance. Updated wallet cards will be issued upon renewal.

6. CERTIFICATION FEES

- 6.1. The application fee for certification examination in any grade shall be payable to the CA-NV Section. The current application fee shall be posted on the application forms provided by the Section.
- 6.2. The application fee must accompany the completed application form.
- 6.3. Checks returned for non-sufficient funds (NSF) will be subject to a returned check charge equal to the application fee.

7. CERTIFICATION UPGRADE

- 7.1. Individuals with current Grades I through III certifications may apply to test for the next higher grade with submittal of an application and required fee. (See Section 5 of these Rules).
- 7.2. A Certified Associate may apply to upgrade to Certified Operator upon completion of the required experience as detailed in Section 3 of these rules. An individual with advanced Associate certification may maintain separate Associate and Operator certifications at different grade levels provided that the Associate grade level exceeds the Operator grade level. If a qualifying individual upgrades to an Operator certification at a grade level equal to or greater than his/her Associate grade level, the individual's Associate certification will be discontinued.
- 7.3. Applications for examination will not be accepted from any individual requesting a grade more than one (1) grade higher than they currently hold.
- 7.4. The Administrator's decision as to any individual's qualifications for upgrade may be appealed per Section 11 of these rules.

8. CERTIFICATION RENEWAL

- 8.1. An initial certificate for any grade shall be valid for a period of two years from the date of issuance. Any person wishing to maintain a valid certificate shall submit an application for renewal prior to the expiration date, but no more than six months prior to the expiration date indicated on the certificate. The request for renewal shall include the following:
 - (a) The applicant's name, current mailing address, grade, and certificate number
 - (b) Payment of the renewal fee specified in the renewal notice
 - (c) Proof of the required continuing education contact hours as defined in Section 8.2, Table A of these rules. For each successfully completed course, the proof of completion shall include the name of the course, the name of the instructor, the location, the date(s), and the number of contact hours provided

- 8.2.** To be eligible for certificate renewal, certificate holders shall complete continuing education contact hours since the previous renewal or issuance of the certificate pursuant to Table A. No more than 25% of the contact hours shall be safety courses.

Table A - Required Continuing Education Contact Hours for Certificate Renewal

Distribution Operators/Associates	Contact Hours Required
Distribution 1	12
Distribution 2	16
Distribution 3	24
Distribution 4	24

- (a)** The certificate holder shall retain proof of continuing education as supplied by the acceptable provider for a minimum of four years
- (b)** Certificate holders possessing certificates in more than one CA-NV AWWA discipline may apply continuing education credits obtained within a renewal period to all current certificates
- (c)** Full semester courses taken at an accredited college, related to the operation and maintenance of public water supply systems shall be applicable for the hours listed in the course outline
- (d)** Any certificate holder selected for an audit of compliance with the continuing education requirement shall submit to the Section a copy of the applicant's proof of completion provided by the provider of the continuing education within 30 calendar days of notification of the audit (Timeline is a guideline and, if missed, will not affect the validity of the action to which they refer)
 - (i)** The certificate for any applicant for renewal who is found to have not successfully completed the continuing education requirement of this article will be revoked
 - (ii)** The applicant shall have the right to appeal the finding by written request filed with the Administrator. The Administrator shall transmit the request and recommendation to the Committee Chair, whose decision shall be final.
- (e)** When applying for renewal of a certificate, an applicant may request a waiver of all or part of the continuing education requirement. To be eligible for a waiver, an applicant shall verify the following in writing to the Section Office:

- (i) Residence in another country for at least half the period since the certificate was issued or last renewed, and that this prevented completion of the continuing education requirements
- (f) Absence from employment due to military service during the certificate period, since the certificate was issued or last renewed; an applicant will follow the pro-rated CEU requirement pursuant to Table B.

Table B - Pro-rated Required Continuing Education Contact Hours for Certificate Renewal

Military service	% of Contact Hours Required
3 – 6 Months	80%
6 – 9 Months	70%
9 – 12 Months	60%
12 – 15 Months	50%
15 – 18 Months	40%
18 – 21 Months	30%
21 – 24 Months	Full Waiver

- (g) When applying for renewal of a certificate, an applicant may request a voluntary temporary suspension of the certificate. A voluntary temporary suspension suspends all rights and responsibilities related to the certificate. To be eligible for a voluntary temporary suspension, an applicant shall verify the following in writing to the Section Office:
 - (i) Illness or other good cause, verified by a corroborating statement from a licensed physician that precluded completion of the continuing education requirements. Qualifying illnesses or causes include, but are not limited to:
 - a) Total physical and/or mental disability of the individual for at least half of the period since the certificate was issued or last renewed
 - b) Total physical and/or mental disability of an immediate family member for at least half of the period since the certificate was issued or last renewed, where the applicant has total responsibility for the care of that family member
 - (ii) A voluntary temporary suspension of a certificate can extend a maximum of two years. To end a temporary suspension, the applicant must supply verification from a licensed physician that corroborated the reason for the voluntary suspension that the condition

has been mitigated and meet the continuing education requirements and pay all fees and penalties due

- 8.3.** Each successfully renewed certificate shall be valid for a period of two years.
- 8.4.** Renewal notices are mailed sixty (60) days prior to an individual's expiration date. It is the responsibility of the individual to notify the Section of a change in address.
- 8.5.** Individuals failing to renew their certificate within three (3) months after their expiration date will pay an additional fee equal to the amount of the renewal fee. Individuals, who have not renewed their certificates within six (6) months of their expiration date, will be removed from the current certification program files.
- 8.6.** Individuals delinquent over six (6) months, yet less than one (1) year, may request reinstatement by submitting an application, the application fee, and show continued employment in the water industry and/or continued education.
- 8.7.** Individual's delinquent over one (1) year must submit an application, pay the appropriate fee, and pass the appropriate water treatment examination with a passing score.

9. EXAMINATION

- 9.1.** The Section utilizes water distribution operator examinations prepared by the Committee under the "Need to Know" guidelines of the Association of Boards of Certification (ABC). The examinations are changed regularly to ensure their confidentiality, reflect current practice, and maintain compliance with national reciprocity guidelines.
- 9.2.** Examinations of Grades I through IV are written exams. All Examinations are "closed-book".
- 9.3.** Written examinations will be conducted at scheduled locations and dates within California or Nevada to meet the needs of the majority of applicants, with the Section providing the information upon request. Exams are administered by a local proctor approved by the Administrator. Written examinations may also be given at the semi-annual Section conferences.
- 9.4.** An applicant failing an exam (less than 70% score) may apply for re-examination after 6 months upon submission of a new application and payment of fee.
- 9.5.** If an applicant fails to appear for a scheduled examination without prior notification to the Section Office, he/she will be required to resubmit an application and fee for a future exam.
- 9.6.** Applicants seeking a higher certification grade must be current with the grade they currently possess.

10. CERTIFICATES

- 10.1.** Upon passing the certification exam with a score of seventy percent (70%) or better, a Certificate, issued by the Section, will state the type and grade of certification, full name of the

individual, certificate number, date of issuance, the official seal of the Section, and be signed by the Certification Administrator and Certification Director.

10.2. A currently certified individual may request a replacement or duplicate certificate from the Section Office for a nominal fee.

11. REVOCATION/APPEAL

11.1. The Section may suspend or revoke a practitioner's certificate for cause. Cause shall include a failure, in serious degree, to observe Section certification standards. A written complaint specifying the alleged reasons for revocation may be filed with the Certification Director, who, in consultation with the Committee Chair, shall determine whether the allegations in the complaint, if true, would constitute cause for revocation. The revocation of a certificate shall occur only after the practitioner has been given a fifteen-day prior written notice of the proposed revocation and the reasons therefore. The practitioner shall have an opportunity to be heard, orally or in writing, not less than five days before the effective date of the discipline by the Committee Chair, whose findings and conclusion shall be reviewed by the Committee and approved (or remanded to Committee Chair for further proceedings, as specified). Upon ultimate approval by the Committee, the revocation shall become final. The Committee Chair may suspend or revoke the credential for up to 12 months from the decision to revoke.

12. RECIPROCITY (APPLIES TO OPERATOR CERTIFICATION ONLY)

12.1. Certificates issued by equivalent water distribution operator certification programs may be eligible for reciprocity into the Section's Water Distribution Operator program by recommendation from the Program Administrator. In order to determine reciprocity eligibility, the following information must be submitted to the Administrator:

- (a)** A copy of one's current certificate and/or wallet card
- (b)** Proof of qualifying experience for the grade requested
- (c)** Completed application
- (d)** Application Fee

13. REINSTATEMENT

13.1. A certificate that has been revoked for failure to complete the continuing education contact hours required in Section 8.2, Table A may be reinstated within six months if all requirements specified in Section 8.2, Table A are met and all penalties as established in the Rules Governing Certification are paid and the renewal application is completed. Contact hours obtained for reinstatement shall not be used to satisfy the requirements of the next renewal period.

13.2. A certificate that has been expired for more than one year shall not be renewed.

13.3. The expiration date of a certificate that has been renewed pursuant to this section shall remain the same as if the previous certificate had been renewed prior to the expiration date.

14. ACCEPTANCE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

14.1. Only providers who offer continuing education programs that meet all of the following criteria shall be accepted. The Provider shall:

- (a)** Use instructors who are competent in the subject matter by education, training, or experience. (A brief biography of the instructor must be maintained and available upon request)
- (b)** Offer courses that are a minimum of 50 minutes in duration (excluding participant evaluation of the continuing education program)
- (c)** Offer courses that are relevant to the scope of duties related to the certificate
- (d)** Have clearly stated and measurable education objectives
- (e)** Use teaching methods which are consistent with the objectives of the continuing education program
- (f)** Have a method for determining participants' attendance and/or participation in the class and exams
- (g)** Maintain accurate and complete records and copies of all reference materials, handouts and all additional materials provided to and used by the participants
- (h)** Maintain the capacity to provide documentation verifying the provider's compliance with items listed in 14.1(a) through (g) upon request

15. REVISION OF RULES

15.1. The Water Distribution/Treatment Certification Committee may recommend revisions to these Rules as necessary to institute new policies and to improve and/or maintain the integrity of the program. Recommended revisions shall be submitted to the Certification Board for consideration and approval. Approved revisions shall be submitted to the Section Governing Board for final consideration and approval. Upon approval from the Section Governing Board, such revisions will be published sixty (60) days prior to the effective date.

15.2. The Certification Director and the Section Chair may render decisions on matters not explicitly covered in these Rules.