



## **EPA REGION 8 – TRIBAL DRINKING WATER OPERATOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

This national program, effective on October 1, 2010, enables qualified drinking water operators at public water systems (PWS) in Indian country to be recognized as certified operators by EPA.

### **Why Get Certified?**

- A Tribe must have, or agree to obtain within a certain time frame, certified operator(s) for the PWS to secure funds in the Drinking Water Infrastructure Grant Tribal Set-Aside (DWIG TSA) Program
- Federal drinking water regulations (e.g. Surface Water Treatment Rules and Disinfectant/Disinfection Byproduct Rules) require “qualified” operators
- Lack of a certified operator at the appropriate levels for Treatment and Distribution at a PWS is considered a Significant Deficiency by EPA Region 8

Note: EPA Region 8 extends reciprocity to operators already certified by a State with an approved operator certification program and other EPA-approved certification providers

### **Special Features of the EPA Tribal Drinking Water Operator Certification Program:**

- Offers Very Small Water System (VSWS) and Operator In Training (OIT) options, as well as Levels 1-4 Water Treatment and Water Distribution certifications
- Water systems with a groundwater supply and only (non-gaseous) chlorination are considered just a distribution system, no Treatment Certification needed.

#### **➤ VERY SMALL WATER SYSTEM (VSWS)**

This is a combined Treatment and Distribution System certification. Only 1 test required, related to both treatment and distribution. Available for less complex systems that:

- (1) Serve 500 or fewer people
- (2) Have no treatment other than disinfection or only treatment that does not require chemicals, process adjustment, backwashing, media regeneration by the operator (scores 30 pts or less Water Treatment point rating)

➤ **OPERATOR IN TRAINING (OIT)**

This option is available for operators seeking VSWS or Class 1 levels, who do not meet the education and/or experience criteria. They must pass the exam at the appropriate level and then:

- Complete a basic operator course (can be on-line or CD-ROM)
- Fulfill the renewal continuing education requirements to receive full certification at the time of renewal (3 years).
- Once an operator completes the OIT program, they are eligible to test for higher certification levels after completing the experience and renewal hours for the next level.

**WATER TREATMENT AND DISTRIBUTION CERTIFICATION REQ'TS \***

| Level   | Education   | Approved Training                                      | Operating Experience   |
|---------|---|--|--|
| VSWS    | High School diploma or GED**  | 5 Continuing Education (CE) Hours of approved training | Six months   |
| Level 1 | High School diploma or GED **   | 10 CE Hours of approved training                       | One year   |
| Level 2 | High School diploma or GED, or completion of OIT  | 30 CE Hours of approved training                       | Two years  |
| Level 3 | High school diploma or GED AND 1 year of post high school education or equivalent in approved training  | 50 CE Hours of approved training                       | Five years   |
| Level 4 | High school diploma or GED AND 2 years of post high school education or equivalent in approved training | 80 CE Hours of approved training                       | Six years (at least 1½ yrs after obtained Level 3 certificate) |

\* In addition to requirements above, the operator must pass the applicable exam with a minimum score of 70%

\*\* OIT option allowed

The application form for the EPA National Tribal Operator Certification Program may be found at <https://www.epa.gov/tribaldrinkingwater/tribal-drinking-water-operator-certification-program>

For more information please contact EPA Region 8:

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