



# NEED-TO-KNOW CRITERIA

## Wastewater Collection Operator Class III

A Need-to-Know Guide when preparing for the:

**ABC Wastewater Collection Operator Class III Certification Exam**



The Associated Boards  
of Certification

*Superior Water Starts Here™*

# Before You Dive In...

## **What is the Need-to-Know Criteria?**

This **ABC Wastewater Collection Operator Class III** Need-to-Know Criteria was developed to assist operators in understanding the content that will be covered in the ABC Standardized Wastewater Collection Operator Class III exam. A methodical and comprehensive international investigation was conducted to determine the most significant job tasks performed by wastewater collection operators. The content covered on the exam represents the job tasks identified through this research as essential operator competencies, and is not limited to the practices of your system/facility. The following pages organize these job tasks into Content Areas and identify the amount of the test devoted to each area.

## **Is this Need-to-Know Criteria relevant to MY exam?**

WPI offers a variety of standardized and customized exam services. This document is reflective only of the ABC Standardized Wastewater Collection Operator Class III exam; older editions of the standardized exam and various customized exams are also administered by various certification programs. Please contact your certifying authority to determine whether they have implemented this exam for your program.

## **Pre-Test Questions**

Your exam may include up to 10 extra questions that have not been used on previous versions of the exam. These are known as “pre-test” questions and allow WPI to gather valuable data about the new questions before they are included in future tests. Pre-test questions are unidentified and scattered throughout the exam so you will answer them with the same care in which you address scored questions. The pre-test questions are not included in your final score.

## **Exam Preparation Resources**

Visit [gowpi.org](http://gowpi.org) to access the formula/conversion table administered with this exam, a list of approved references, information on purchasing study guides available from partner organizations, and more.

## **Copyright Notice**

All examination questions are the copyrighted property of WPI. It is forbidden under federal copyright law to copy, reproduce, record, distribute, or display these examination questions by any means, in whole or in part, without written permission from WPI. Doing so may subject violators to severe civil and criminal penalties.




*Copyright 2017, reprinted in April 2023, by Water Professionals International. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system without written permission from the publisher.*

# Wastewater Collection Operator Class III Need-to-Know Criteria



















## EXAM CONTENT

The Wastewater Collection Operator Class III exam will test you on essential job tasks. These job tasks have been categorized into the Content Areas detailed in the following pages. The table below summarizes the areas that are included on the exam, the number of test questions in each of these areas, and the complexity of the test questions in each area.

Just as wastewater collection operator job duties vary in their complexity, so will the questions you are asked on the exam. Some will be more simple and routine, whereas others will be more complex, or cognitively demanding. The following three levels are used to describe the complexity of the questions you will encounter on this exam:

- 
**Recall** – tasks at this level typically require the simple recall or recognition of specific facts, concepts, processes, or procedures, with little to no problem-solving involved. You may be asked to identify, illustrate, recall, and/or recognize specific information.
- 
**Application** – tasks at this level will involve some basic problem solving, calculations, or the interpretation and application of data. You may be asked to calculate, categorize, classify, compare, differentiate, explain, specify, translate, and/or apply knowledge.
- 
**Analysis** – tasks at this level may involve higher level problem solving, evaluation, or the fitting together of a variety of elements into a meaningful whole; they will usually require many steps in the thought process. You may be asked to analyze, evaluate, formulate, generalize, judge, predict, and/or use inductive or deductive reasoning to arrive at a solution.

### EXAM CONTENT OUTLINE

NUMBER OF QUESTIONS	CONTENT AREA	JOB TASK COMPLEXITY LEVELS
25	Equipment Operation, Evaluation, & Maintenance	 5  15  5
25	Collection System Operation, Maintenance, & Restoration	 5  15  5
15	Lift Station Operation & Maintenance	 3  9  3
15	Collection System Monitoring, Evaluation, & Adjustment	 3  9  3
20	Security, Safety, & Administrative Procedures	 4  12  4
100*	Total	 20  60  20

THIS EXAM INCLUDES  
**12**  
calculation questions

\*Your exam may contain up to 10 extra unscored pre-test questions (see *Before You Dive In* for more details).



5 Recall



15 Application






5 Analysis

# Equipment Operation, Evaluation, & Maintenance

## Job Tasks Included in this Content Area:

- 1. Adjust and calibrate gas meters, flow meters, and blower meters**
- 2. Calibrate and adjust pneumatic equipment systems**
- 3. Clean the collection system through the use of:**
  - a. Hydraulic cleaning (e.g., balling, flushing, poly pigs)
  - b. Jet rodding
  - c. Blockage removal
  - d. Rodding
  - e. Root control using chemical addition
- 4. Operate the following equipment:**
  - a. Computers
  - b. Heavy equipment (e.g., vehicles requiring a CDL license)
- 5. Evaluate and maintain the operation of equipment by:**
  - a. Inspecting abnormal conditions
  - b. Measuring temperature
  - c. Reading charts
  - d. Reading gauges
  - e. Reading meters
- 6. Evaluate and maintain the operation of electrical equipment:**
  - a. Variable frequency drives (VFDs)
  - b. Motor control centers
  - c. Low voltage equipment (e.g., flow meters, float switch, PID controls, pressure sensors)
- 7. Inspect system using the following approaches:**
  - a. Dye testing
  - b. Physical inspection
  - c. Smoke test
- 8. Rehabilitate and repair collection system:**
  - a. Lift station (e.g., wet wells, fittings and piping)
  - b. Manholes
  - c. Sewer lines
  - d. Taps (e.g., top hat, grouting, protruding laterals)
  - e. Infiltration, inflow, exfiltration
- 9. Inspect equipment or monitor operating conditions, meters, and gauges to determine load requirements and detect malfunctions of lift station**
- 10. Inspect the operation of equipment to determine malfunction**
- 11. Perform system inspections**  
(e.g., air release valves, inlets, manholes, outfalls, overflows, regulators, siphons, sluice gates)
- 12. Perform preventive maintenance including repair, replacement, and installation of the following equipment:**
  - a. Chemical feed systems
  - b. Motors
  - c. Pumps
  - d. Valves
  - e. Compressors
  - f. Engines
  - g. Gearboxes
  - h. Generators
  - i. Pneumatic and hydraulic systems
- 13. Operate the following equipment and/or tools:**
  - a. Aeration tanks and blowers
  - b. Air compressors
  - c. Backflow prevention devices
  - d. Backhoes
  - e. Chain pull hoists and overhead cranes
  - f. Chemical feed systems
  - g. Chlorination systems
  - h. Dump trucks
  - i. Pumps (fixed and portable, all types)
  - j. Engines
  - k. Flushing unit (dumping water into the system)
  - l. Front-end loaders
  - m. Hydrant operations
  - n. Hydraulic equipment (e.g., jacks, press, compactor)
  - o. Metal detectors and pipe locators
  - p. Pneumatic tools
  - q. Power tools (e.g., drills, grinders, saws)
  - r. Precision measuring instruments
  - s. Rodding equipment
  - t. Manhole guide rollers
  - u. Samplers
  - v. Tapping equipment
  - w. Testing equipment
  - x. Welding equipment (e.g., MIG, TIG, arc, plasma, oxyacetylene)
  - y. Fans (e.g., forced air, air extraction)
  - z. Easement hydro-jetter machine (portable)



-  5 Recall
-  15 Application
-  5 Analysis

# Collection System Operation, Maintenance, & Restoration

## Job Tasks Included in this Content Area:

- 1. Clean and maintain tanks**  
(e.g., wet wells, chemical, holding)
- 2. Collect and document data from charts, gauges, and other instrumentation**
- 3. Excavate wastewater mains and lines**
- 4. Use high pressure hydraulics to clean wastewater mains and lines**
- 5. Inspect structures**  
(e.g., manholes, vaults, wet wells for damage, cave-ins, debris)
- 6. Interpret blueprints, GIS, and sketches of system showing location and configuration of collection system components**
- 7. Lubricate engines and pumps**
- 8. Maintain all equipment**  
(e.g., pumps, motors, chlorinators, chemical feeds)  
in accordance with OEM specifications
- 9. Maintain an inventory of chemicals and materials**
- 10. Monitor panel board and adjust controls to regulate flow rates**
- 11. Monitor CSO basin operations and functions and adjust as necessary**
- 12. Operate pumping equipment during emergency bypass operations**
- 13. Operate odor control devices and systems**
- 14. Perform maintenance and inspection through the use of:**
  - a. Hydraulic cleaning
  - b. Rodding
  - c. Closed circuit television (CCTV) camera inspection and locating



3 Recall



9 Application



3 Analysis

## Lift Station Operation & Maintenance Job Tasks Included in this Content Area:

- 1. Ensure that the following electrical devices are functioning properly:**
  - a. Fuses
  - b. Motors
  - c. Relays
  - d. Starters
- 2. Ensure that the following electronic devices are functioning properly:**
  - a. Alarms
  - b. Controllers
  - c. Gas detection
  - d. Level detection system
  - e. Telemetry (e.g., RTUs, SCADA, PLCs)
- 3. Ensure that the following devices are functioning properly:**
  - a. Piping
  - b. Pressure relief valves  
(e.g., compressors, hot water heaters)
  - c. Chemical addition
  - d. Pumps
  - e. Valves
  - f. Wet wells (e.g., screens and level controls)
  - g. Air relief/vacuum valves (force mains)
  - h. Seals
  - i. Air exchangers/exhaust fans
  - j. HVAC systems
- 4. Adjust equipment and increase or decrease pumping capacity for proper flow**
- 5. Perform calculations to ensure proper operations**
- 6. Calibrate and adjust variable frequency drive (VFD) systems**
- 7. Monitor panel board and adjust controls to:**
  - a. Loss of head pressure
  - b. Wet well elevation
- 8. Operate the following equipment and/or tools:**
  - a. Bar screens
  - b. Wet wells
  - c. Variable frequency drives (VFDs)
  - d. Electric motors



3 Recall



9 Application



3 Analysis

# Collection System Monitoring, Evaluation, & Adjustment

## Job Tasks Included in this Content Area:

**1. Perform adjustments on the following components of the collection system:**

- a. Aeration for hydrogen sulfide control
- b. Biological filters for odor control
- c. Chemical addition for hydrogen sulfide control
- d. Flow monitoring
- e. Force mains
- f. Gravity sewers
- g. Lift stations
- h. Manholes/cleanouts
- i. Measuring and control systems
- j. Pressure sewers (S.T.E.P.)
- k. Vacuum sewers

**2. Analyze and adjust chemical feed devices that inject specified amounts of chemicals into sewer systems**

**3. Analyze ongoing collection system operations for defects**

**4. Assist lab technician in the collection of wastewater and perform field/laboratory tests and analyses**

**5. Calibrate and adjust the following systems:**

- a. Aeration systems
- b. Atmosphere testers
- c. Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs)
- d. Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA)
- e. Level and flow meters
- f. Telemetry equipment

**6. Check equalization basins and CSO structures**

**7. Ensure accurate sampling of waste collection system according to standard methods**

**8. Identify physical and/or abnormal characteristics of wastewater**

**9. Inspect the installation of piping**

**10. Operate electric motors, pumps, and valves to regulate flow**

**11. Repair and replace:**

- a. Sewer lines
- b. Combined sewer lines

**12. Review automated information and control system data and revise settings as required**

**13. Utilize wastewater analysis devices for chemical detection in collection systems**

(e.g., nitrate, hydrogen sulfide, pH, phosphorous)

**14. Operate flow sensors**



4 Recall



12 Application



4 Analysis




# Security, Safety, & Administrative Procedures

## Job Tasks Included in this Content Area:

- Analyze/estimate cost**  
(e.g., equipment, material, power, fuel, staffing)
- Analyze regulatory and/or compliance requirements**
- Assign work crews to work areas**
- Assist in the handling, delivery, and storage of chemicals**
- Authorize equipment repairs**
- Calculate cleaning and production rates**
- Compile technical and statistical data and prepare comprehensive written reports**
- Comply with all health and safety procedures and protocols**
- Conduct safety inspections**
- Configure traffic plans and set up signs for traffic control**
- Coordinate wastewater program activities with other divisions and outside agencies, contractors, and developers**
- Determine work schedules for closed circuit television (CCTV) crews**
- Determine location of underground utilities**  
(e.g., combined sewers, cross connections, force mains, inlets, laterals, manholes, outfalls, sanitary sewers, laterals)
- Determine shift schedules and assign work crews to ensure continuity of operation**
- Develop operating and capital budgets**
- Develop preventive maintenance procedures**
- Develop safety procedures**
- Develop training programs**  
(e.g., start up and testing, standard operating procedures, technical documentation for operations)
- Comply with safety standards and safety programs**
- Ensure compliance of discharge limits are in accordance with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations**
- Establish wastewater policies, procedures, and guidelines**
- Assess training needs to upgrade operational skills**
- Implement a quality control/quality assurance program to ensure that products and services received meet contractual requirements**
- Inspect and analyze system logs records, gauges, meters, and other testing and measuring devices**
- Investigate various customer issues**  
(e.g., sewer backup and/or odor complaints)
- Maintain knowledge of regulatory permit requirements**
- Maintain effective working relationships with city officials, employees, public, and outside agencies**
- Manage employee certification programs**
- Maintain knowledge of cost accounting and budget procedures and practices**
- Maintain records and file reports**  
(e.g., internal or regulatory requirements)
- Maintain knowledge of current regulatory requirements**
- Monitor status of customer work orders and assure customer responsiveness**
- Monitor work and job site condition to ensure protection of workers, public pedestrian, and vehicular traffic**
- Perform the following administrative activities:**
  - Safety/security evaluation and compliance
  - Budget development
  - Capital improvement plan development
  - Operation and maintenance plan development
  - Employee supervision and performance evaluations
  - Employee hiring
  - Planning and organization of work activities
  - Record keeping and evaluation of data
  - Responses to public complaints
  - Report writing (e.g., federal, internal, state)





-  4 Recall
-  12 Application
-  4 Analysis

# Security, Safety, & Administrative Procedures

## Job Tasks Included in this Content Area:

### 35. Perform the following safety procedures:

- a. Calibration of atmospheric testing devices
- b. Chemical spill responses
- c. Confined space entry
- d. Electrical grounding, hazards, and arc flash
- e. Fires (e.g., prevention, fire extinguishers)
- f. First aid
- g. Hazardous materials
- h. Infectious diseases/blood borne pathogen protection
- i. Lifting
- j. Lock-out/tag-out
- k. Personal Protective Equipment (e.g., respiratory protection, safety glasses, gloves, hardhats, fall protection)
- l. Shoring, trenching, and excavation
- m. Traffic control/work zone safety

### 36. Plan for the execution of the following emergency plans:

- a. Sewer overflow
- b. Disasters
- c. Manhole hazards
- d. System failure
- e. Interagency assistance

### 37. Perform facility safety audits

### 38. Prepare bid specifications

### 39. Purchase replacement equipment

### 40. Review/update employment policies and procedures

### 41. Review employee reports regarding customer backup in home

### 42. Train new operators

### 43. Review easement and right-of-way issues/problems

# Supporting Knowledge

The chart below outlines several types of knowledge that support the performance of the job tasks on which you may be tested. These types of knowledge are rated at one of three levels to represent the extent of knowledge needed to perform the job tasks assigned to each Content Area:

**Basic** – A fundamental or lower level of knowledge is required. Operators performing tasks requiring this level of knowledge will be able to do so with some training; this level of knowledge may also be acquired and developed through job experience. Such tasks may be routine, utilizing established procedures, and have a low level of complexity. Not having this level of knowledge will have minimal impact or significance on the performance of the tasks listed in the Content Area, or on public safety and welfare.

**Intermediate** – A level of knowledge beyond the basic level is required. Operators performing tasks requiring this level of knowledge will be able to do so with training beyond that of the basic level. The operator will not only be able to apply required fundamental concepts, but will be able to understand and discuss the application and implications of changes to processes, policies, and procedures within the Content Area. Not having this level of knowledge will have a significant impact on the performance of the job and on public safety and welfare.

**Advanced** – A very high level of knowledge/job expertise is required and the operator will be functioning at an expert level. The operator can apply all fundamental, as well as highly developed or complex concepts, and will be able to design, review, and evaluate processes, policies, and procedures within the Content Area. Not having this level of knowledge will have a serious impact on the performance of the job and will be very harmful to public safety and welfare.

Supporting Knowledge Type	Equipment Operation, Evaluation, & Maintenance (25%)*	Collection System Operation, Maintenance, & Restoration (25%)*	Lift Station Operation & Maintenance (15%)*	Collection System Monitoring, Evaluation, & Adjustment (15%)*	Security, Safety, & Administrative Procedures (20%)*
Aerobic and Anaerobic principles (e.g., wet wells, diffusers, surge basins, available oxygen)	Intermediate		Intermediate	Intermediate	
Backflow cross-connection and prevention		Intermediate			Intermediate
Biology (e.g., bloodborne pathogens, hydrogen sulfide formation, odors, wastewater characteristics)					Intermediate
Biological laboratory testing (e.g., BOD, COD, DO, pH, sampling, identification, oil, grease)				Intermediate	
Chemistry (e.g., chemical addition, odor and corrosion control)				Intermediate	
Hydraulic principles (e.g., pump operation, pressures, pipe capacity, velocity, storage time, surcharging)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	
Laboratory techniques (e.g., grab and composite sampling, sample preservation)				Intermediate	
Mechanical principles (e.g., lift station pumps, engines, air exchangers, continuous rodders)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Blueprint reading (e.g., service connections, as-built plans, process and instrumentation diagrams)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	
Building codes (e.g., easements/right-of-ways and sewer use ordinances, pipe specifications and inspections)		Intermediate		Intermediate	Intermediate
Chemical properties (e.g., chlorine, hydrogen sulfide, methane, carbon monoxide, oxygen)				Intermediate	Advanced

Supporting Knowledge Type	Equipment Operation, Evaluation, & Maintenance (25%)*	Collection System Operation, Maintenance, & Restoration (25%)*	Lift Station Operation & Maintenance (15%)*	Collection System Monitoring, Evaluation, & Adjustment (15%)*	Security, Safety, & Administrative Procedures (20%)*
Chemical metering (e.g., gases, liquids, solids)	Intermediate	Basic	Intermediate	Basic	Intermediate
Comminutors, grinders, bar screens	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate		
Computer operations (SCADA systems, telemetry, flow metering, computerized maintenance management systems)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Contaminants (e.g., volatile organics, high temperatures, viscous materials)		Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Contract negotiation (e.g., vendors, pre-treatment negotiations, union contracts)					Intermediate
Corrosion control process (e.g., cathodic protection, hydrogen sulfide, manhole and pipe rehabilitation)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Disinfection concepts (e.g., chlorination, hydrogen peroxide addition, personal hygiene)					Intermediate
Electrical principles (e.g., troubleshooting breakers, relays, circuits)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Employment laws					Intermediate
Flow measuring devices (e.g., parshall flumes, mag meter, flow meters, venturis)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	
Lubricants and fluids	Intermediate	Basic	Intermediate	Basic	
Maintenance practices (e.g., preventive, reactive, predictive)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Safety Data Sheets					Advanced
Normal characteristics of wastewater (e.g., color, odor, concentration, aerobic, anaerobic, wastestream, per capita contributions)		Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Normal chemical ranges			Intermediate	Intermediate	
Pneumatic principles (e.g., troubleshooting actuators, compressors, sprayers)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate		
Pipe fittings and joining methods (e.g., pipeline construction principles)		Intermediate			Intermediate
Piping material type and size (e.g., PVC, CMP, RCP)		Intermediate			Intermediate
Principles of asset management (e.g., preventive, reactive, predictive maintenance)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate
Principles of finance (e.g., bonds, rate structures)					Intermediate
Principles of supervision					Intermediate
Process control instrumentation (e.g., PLCs, SCADA, continuous online monitoring)	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	
Public administration practices (e.g., open meeting laws, record keeping, budgeting, notifications, reporting requirements)					Intermediate
Risk management (e.g., natural, man-made, overflow response plans)					Intermediate

<b>Supporting Knowledge Type</b>	<b>Equipment Operation, Evaluation, &amp; Maintenance (25%)*</b>	<b>Collection System Operation, Maintenance, &amp; Restoration (25%)*</b>	<b>Lift Station Operation &amp; Maintenance (15%)*</b>	<b>Collection System Monitoring, Evaluation, &amp; Adjustment (15%)*</b>	<b>Security, Safety, &amp; Administrative Procedures (20%)*</b>
Sanitary survey processes (e.g., I & I, collection system operation)					<b>Intermediate</b>
Start up and shut down procedures (e.g., lift stations)	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Intermediate</b>		
Wastewater collection design parameters (e.g., slope, distances between manholes, pipe specifications)		<b>Intermediate</b>			<b>Advanced</b>
Pipeline cleaning (e.g., mechanical, hydraulic)	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	
Sanitary sewer overflows (e.g., SSO, CSO)	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>

*\*Percent of exam associated with the Content Area*

# ABC

# Testing

A **WPI** SERVICE



The Associated Boards  
of Certification

*Superior Water Starts Here™*

9400 Plum Drive, Suite 160  
Urbandale, IA 50322  
+1 (515) 232-3623

[gowpi.org](http://gowpi.org)

[ProfessionalOperator.org](http://ProfessionalOperator.org)

[wpi@gowpi.org](mailto:wpi@gowpi.org)

[Info@ProfessionalOperator.org](mailto:Info@ProfessionalOperator.org)