



NEVADA CERTIFICATION BOARD FOR WATER PROFESSIONALS

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Non-Regulatory Certification Changes 2020 – What You Need to Know

The Certification Board for Water Professionals and the Nevada Water Environment Association (NWEA) Executive Board approved rule changes to enhance NWEA's non-regulatory certification programs. This includes certifications for Wastewater Quality Analysts, Industrial Waste Inspectors, Collection System Operators, Plant Maintenance Technicians, and Industrial Waste Operators (physical/chemical and biological). The new rules become effective on May 16, 2020, and are similar to rule changes implemented in 2018 to the State of Nevada regulatory program for Wastewater Treatment Plant operators.

The rule changes serve to ensure ongoing protection of public health and the environment in an increasingly demanding regulatory environment, and to align with national credentialing standards. The rule changes also raise the bar for Nevada's certified community, who have been disadvantaged in the national job market for many years.

Existing non-regulatory certifications in good standing are exempted from meeting the revised rules for initial experience and initial education for as long as the existing certification is maintained in good standing. If an existing non-regulatory certification becomes decertified, all revised rules will apply to re-acquiring that grade of certification.

Certificants seeking new certifications or advancing existing certifications to a higher grade (including applicants who failed previous exams) will need to meet all revised rules, including initial education, total experience, and grade level experience.

CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

All certificants will be required to complete approved continuing education for renewing certifications. Certificants submitting courses that have not been pre-approved run the risk of not receiving credit if the Contact Hours denied. Up to 20% of the continuing education requirement may be safety related, but safety courses are NOT required for certification renewals. The following amount of continuing education is required for each 2-year renewal (and must be obtained within each 2-year renewal cycle). For reference, ten contact hours are equivalent to one continuing education unit (CEU).

- Grade 1 – 5 contact hours (0.5 CEU)
- Grade 2 – 10 contact hours (1.0 CEU)
- Grade 3 – 15 contact hours (1.5 CEU)
- Grade 4 – 20 contact hours (2.0 CEU)

Continuing education requirements will apply to both existing and new certifications. Rule implementation will provide a minimum of two years for each existing certificant to meet the continuing education requirement. For existing certifications expiring May 16, 2020 or later, certificants will not need to obtain continuing education for their first renewal, but will need to meet continuing education requirements for all future renewals. As an example, an operator whose certification expires in October 2020 will not need to obtain continuing education for that renewal, but will need to meet continuing education requirements for their October 2022 and all subsequent renewals (and the continuing education for the October 2022 renewal must be obtained between October 2020 and October 2022).

If a certificant obtains a higher grade of certification after May 16, 2020, adherence to all revised continuing education requirements pertaining to the new certification will be required on the first renewal cycle after obtaining the new certification.

For individuals holding multiple certifications (including Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator), continuing education earned for one certification renewal may be applied to other certification renewals, but only if the Contact Hours occur within each respective certification's two-year renewal window.

Contact Hours must be wastewater related, as determined by the Certification Board, and are equally relevant across all certification disciplines. Pre-approved courses can be found on the NWEA website (www.nwea.org). The Certification Board will consider Contact Hours that have not been pre-approved, though the certificant runs the risk of them not being accepted.

INITIAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Certificants seeking new or upgraded certifications will be required to meet minimum initial education requirements for each grade level, all of which must be wastewater related (as determined by the Certification Board). The education requirements are cumulative and include the previous grade's education (eg: Grade 4 certification requires all Grade 3 education requirements plus two additional post-secondary courses). A post-secondary course is a college level course comprised of at least 36 hours of instruction (classroom, correspondence, or online) that the Certification Board deems relevant (eg: wastewater treatment, chemistry, biology, math, etc).

Grade 1 – 60 hours

Grade 2 – 120 hours

Grade 3 – 120 hours and two postsecondary courses

Grade 4 – 120 hours and four postsecondary courses

EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

Experience requirements will not change. Candidates seeking certification are required to meet minimum experience requirements for each grade level. The experience must be relevant, as determined by the Certification Board.

Grade 1 – 1 year of experience
Grade 2 – Grade I certification and 2 years of experience
Grade 3 – Grade II certification and 3 years of experience
Grade 4 – Grade III certification and 4 years of experience

RESTRICTED CERTIFICATES

The previous Operator-in-Training (OIT) Certificate for Grade 1 will be transitioned to a Restricted Certificate. Similar to the OIT, a Restricted Certificate carry no validation to operate in that discipline but serves as a stepping stone to full Grade I certification. Non-regulatory Restricted Certificates shall be valid for two (2) years and may be renewed in the same manner as Full Certifications. To obtain a Restricted Certificate, applicants must have a High school diploma or GED AND receive a passing score on the certification exam.

SUSPENDED AND EXPIRED CERTIFICATIONS

A certification will be deemed suspended if it is not renewed by the expiration date. Certificants must submit their application, supporting documentation (continuing education), and fee prior to the expiration date. A Certification will be deemed decertified if it is not renewed within six months following the expiration date. Once decertified, the certification may no longer be renewed.

FEE STRUCTURE

Non-regulatory fees charged by NWEA have not increased since 2007. A fee increase was necessary to maintain certification program sustainability moving forward. A commonly asked question is why the non-regulatory fees are higher than the regulatory fees. The reason is that the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection subsidizes a portion of the regulatory program. NWEA does not receive outside funding to subsidize the non-regulatory programs.

- Initial Certification: \$200 (previously \$150)
- Renewals: \$130 (previously \$80)
- Restricted Certificate: \$150 (previously \$150 with no conversion fee to full Grade 1 certification)
- Conversion of Restricted Grade 1 certificate to Full Grade I certification: \$110 (previously \$0)
- Reciprocity: \$250 (previously \$200)
- Reinstatement (within 6 months of suspended certification): \$80 (previously \$20)

The Certification Board is at your disposal to answer questions. For questions or further information, please contact the Program Administrator, Ashley Jacobson, by email at Certification@nvwea.org or by phone at (775) 465-2045.