

Summer 2017
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2017 Harmful Algal Bloom Season

As summer approaches, it is time to prepare for the harmful algal bloom (HAB) season. To protect against cyanobacteria at public water supplies, new rules went into effect on June 1, 2016 for Ohio public water systems (PWS) and laboratories. The rules provide a consistent and established response to cyanotoxins and address cyanotoxin action levels, monitoring, public notification, reporting, treatment technique and laboratory certification requirements. Routine monitoring for total microcystins in raw and finished waters along with biweekly cyanobacteria screening (qPCR), has provided a comprehensive view of HABs in source waters across the state.

Ohio public water systems achieved 100 percent compliance with the new monitoring requirements and, through increased monitoring of source waters, better reservoir management and quick optimization of treatment, no finished water detections of total microcystins were documented in 2016.

In 2016, total microcystins were detected in raw water at 33 percent of Ohio PWSs. Some PWSs detected cyanotoxins for the first time, including late fall and over-winter blooms. Ohio EPA conducted follow up monitoring for saxitoxins in response to positive qPCR gene detections at 33 water systems (27 percent). Of the systems sampled, 15 PWS (12 percent) had saxitoxins present in raw water and six reported finished water detections. Although all were well below Ohio's drinking water threshold, this indicates potential treatment challenges associated with the removal of saxitoxins. Ohio EPA continues to work with water systems and U.S. EPA to develop treatment guidance and optimization techniques.

Overall, qPCR analysis provided a reliable screening tool for both microcystins and saxitoxins. Ohio EPA will be publishing supporting data and analysis later in 2017. Based on the 2016 results and analysis, Ohio EPA developed three monitoring schedules for total microcystins starting on May 1, 2017. Assignment of monitoring schedules was based on cyanotoxin occurrence and treatment capabilities. Specific information about the monitoring requirements was sent to water systems in April.



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HAB RULES FINALIZED...

All PWSs will continue biweekly cyanobacteria screening at least until Dec. 31, 2017 and Ohio EPA will continue to cover all analytical and shipping costs from designated hubs. Detection of saxitoxins or cylindrospermopsin production genes in the cyanobacteria screening sample will trigger follow-up sample analysis and repeat sampling by Ohio EPA, in the same manner as last season. Also unchanged from 2016 are the increased monitoring and reporting requirements for raw water detections of microcystins >5 ug/L and any finished water detections.

During a harmful algal bloom, PWSs are expected to optimize existing treatment processes. Effective changes to treatment include, but are not limited to: increasing PAC (powdered activated carbon) feed, if possible; reducing or eliminating pre-oxidation; and increasing settling basin sludge removal. Total microcystins includes both cellular and extracellular toxins. Extracellular toxins have been released from dead algal cells and cannot be removed by settling and/or filtration. Adequate chlorine contact time and concentration is the standard treatment for extracellular toxin. Additional treatment optimization guidance is available at epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/HAB.aspx.

HAB SEASON PREPARATION SHOULD INCLUDE:

1. Review and update contingency plan procedures for responding to a finished water detection including the designation of distribution system monitoring locations following finished water detections per Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Rule 3745-85-01.
2. Coordinate with local officials and local/county emergency management agencies to discuss procedures for responding to finished water detections.
3. Verify your lab's capacity to handle increased total microcystins monitoring requirements in the event of a finished water detection (daily monitoring) or raw detection greater than 5 ug/L (3x/week monitoring).
4. Confirm emergency contact information for consecutive water systems.
5. Contact your Ohio EPA district office inspector to update phone numbers, email and emergency contact information.
6. Update existing HAB treatment optimization protocols (include any treatment upgrades, changes in operations, and/or revised optimization triggers).

For more information, visit epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/HAB.aspx or contact Ohio EPA's Division of Drinking and Ground Waters at (614) 644-2752.

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Answer Place

Have questions?
Need help?
Click here to visit
the Answer Place.

DEAR ANSWER PLACE:

Should I be using the new Sample Monitoring Point (SMP) IDs for lead and copper sampling this year?

- Operator Mike

DEAR OPERATOR MIKE:

Yes. The new SMP IDs for lead and copper sampling (LC201, LC202, etc.) were completed by public water systems (PWS) this past winter and sent to Ohio EPA with the system's lead maps. Each SMP ID is tied to an address or tap location at a PWS and includes contact information for residents and/or owners. All PWSs should begin using the new SMP IDs when submitting lead and copper samples to a lab.

- Answer Place

HAVE A QUESTION FOR ANSWER PLACE?

Ask a question at <http://ohioepa.custhelp.com>

OPERATOR CERTIFICATION PROPOSED RULE CHANGES

Ohio EPA's Operations, Resiliency and Certification Section has proposed changes to the Operator Certification Rules, Ohio Administration Code 3745-7, during the rule's five-year rule review. We strongly recommend that anyone with interest in the proposed rule changes sign up for the email listserve at https://ohioepa.custhelp.com/app/utils/login_form/redirect/account%252Fprofile. Members will receive up-to-date information about public comment periods and final rule issuance.

Some of the more significant changes are outlined below. All these changes are proposed and are going through the rules process. At this time we have completed interested party review and are in discussions with stakeholders regarding potential revisions to the proposed rule changes.

Operating Experience Definition

Laboratory, pretreatment and engineering experience related to drinking water or wastewater facilities is proposed to be limited to 25 percent of an applicant's total operating experience. In addition, experience from collection or distribution systems will be limited when applying for certification or exam in wastewater treatment or water supply, respectively.

Staffing Requirements

Distribution and collection system operators will be required to visit the system. The number of visits will depend on the classification of the system. Class 1 facility operators will be required to make at least three visits per week while a Class 2 facility operator will be required to visit at least five times per week. In accordance with OAC 3745-7(V)(2), a visit "means a period of time when a person is on-site at a public water system, treatment works, or sewerage system that is sufficient to perform routine sampling (for example, flow, chlorine residual and pH measurements), maintenance and observation of a public water system, sewerage systems, or treatment works in order to ensure compliance and proper operation."

Backup Operators

There is language proposed for violations which occur while a backup operator is in charge.

Contract Operators and Contract Operator Companies

Contract operators and contract operator companies will be required to register with Ohio EPA and there will be minimum requirements for the contract that these entities have with facilities, such as staffing requirements and plans for emergencies.

Record Keeping

Language has been proposed clarifying the requirements for either paper or electronic record keeping. The minimum requirements are spelled out for either type of record.



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FALL 2017

PAPER AND PENCIL EXAM DEADLINES AND DATES

Wastewater

Aug. 10

Application Due

Nov. 8

Exam Date

Water

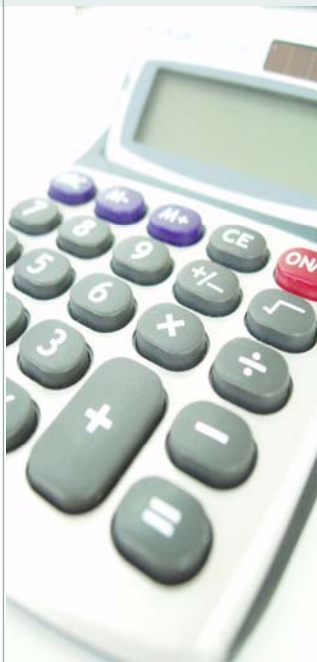
Aug. 11

Application Due

Nov. 9

Exam Date

Call the operator certification hotline at 1-866-411-OPCT (6728) or visit epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/opcert.aspx for more information.



SMALL PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS...

Continued from page 3

Renewal Requirements

Training providers will be required to upload attendance into the eBusiness Center. The grace period for renewal applications is being reduced from one year to six months. There will also be a requirement to take an Ohio EPA update course each renewal cycle.

Have questions about your role as an owner or Operator of Record? Your district office, DDAGW environmental specialist or the Operator Certification Unit can help. Visit the district office website at epa.ohio.gov/districts.aspx or call (614) 644-2752.

OHIO EPA eBUSINESS CENTER TRANSITION

Ohio EPA's Operator Certification Unit is transitioning from paper-based applications to electronic applications in the eBusiness Center. Instructions, both written and video, can be found on Ohio EPA Operator Certification webpage under the eBusiness Center tab. First-time users will need to create an account, request a Personal Identification Number (PIN), and request Operator Service using their Core Person ID.

Exam, Certification, Reciprocity and Course Approval applications must be submitted electronically through the eBusiness Center. The transition for renewal applications is detailed below.

Renewal Applications

For certificates expiring Dec. 31, 2017, operators will receive a postcard in August with instructions. Operators will have the option to request a paper renewal application or they will be able to renew online through the eBusiness Center.

This is the last year that paper renewals will be accepted. Certificates expiring Dec. 31, 2018 must be renewed through the eBusiness Center.

Operator's contact hours will show in their account after the training provider uploads attendance. The training providers are not currently required to upload attendance, so some of the contact hours may not be listed in your account. After Aug. 1, 2017, an operator will be able to open their renewal application and add contact hours to their list using the course approval number, course date and proof of attendance. If the operator earned contact hours through an internet or correspondence course, then the operator will need to add their attendance.

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Ohio EPA will randomly audit a percentage of operators using the paper application. If an operator renews through the eBusiness Center, then they will not have to do anything different on their application, as far as an audit is concerned.

Fee Payment

Any current fees can be paid through the eBusiness Center. Payment methods include credit card, electronic check, paper check or money order. The credit card option has a small fee. The credit card and electronic check are typically processed within 48 hours.

Questions? Please contact the Operator Certification Unit at 1-866-411-6728 or opcert@epa.ohio.gov or visit the webpage at epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/opcert.aspx.



LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

Imagine, digging a huge swimming pool-sized hole about 25 x 30 x 20 feet deep in dirt, rock and mud while searching for a 12 inch water main. Minutes turn to hours as the track-hoe searches for the burst pipe. Distribution map schematics are available, but with no reference points included, they are useless. A routine line break turns into a 36-hour mess with overtime, unsafe conditions, deep trenches, and Ohio EPA involvement. For operators across Ohio, depressurizations can turn into a huge headache if the water system is not fully prepared.

Consider the following items to ensure that you're prepared:

- Accurate GIS coordinate maps with reference points for your system. Ohio Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP) might help: <http://ohrcap.org/index.php?page=geographic-information-system>
- Line locating devices – Possessing and knowing how to use these devices can dramatically save on time. Operator Training Committee of Ohio (OTCO) can help train personnel. <http://www.ohiowater.org/otco/otco.htm>
- Extra trash pumps – Purchasing an extra (even if its oversized) will save time.
- Trench-box(es) – Make sure you have the right size for the job. Remember that any trench more than 20 feet deep must have a professional engineer sign off on the box before repairs can begin. Have a trenching-proficient person in your crew. Send someone to a class with the Bureau of Workers' Compensation – it is free. <https://www.bwc.ohio.gov/>
- Ohio Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (WARN) – This program is neighbors helping neighbors. Become a member, and call neighboring water systems to see if they have any of the equipment mentioned above if your system is in need during an emergency.
- Contingency plan updates and exercises – Make sure the plans are not only updated, and practice the exercises often.

With all emergencies, preparation is key. In this case, the system waited much too long to call for assistance. Don't let pride and fear of what another system would think keep you from making the call early.

OHIO EPA'S SPIGOT NEWS

John R. Kasich, Governor
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Craig W. Butler, Director

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24-HOUR EMERGENCY HOTLINE

For emergencies occurring
after 5 p.m., on a weekend or
holiday, please call Ohio EPA's
emergency hotline at
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RULEMAKING ACTIVITIES

Recently Adopted

- Monitoring for Compliance with Secondary Maximum Contaminant Levels (Aug. 5, 2016)
- Iron and Manganese Treatment, Minor Revisions (effective Oct. 14, 2016)
- Underground Injection Control, Minor Revisions (effective Nov. 11, 2016)
- Contingency Plan Requirements for PWSs (effective Dec. 23, 2016)

Interested Party Review (IPR)

- Lead and Copper Rule Revisions, incorporating House Bill 512; propose to file, tentative summer 2017
- Operator Certification Amendments and New Rule; propose to file, tentative summer 2017



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- Resiliency and Water Security: Emergency Management Information for Public Works
- Harmful Algal Blooms Mailing List: Updates for Public Water Systems and Laboratories
- DDAGW Spigot News: Newsletter for Public Drinking Water Systems
- Drinking Water: Rulemaking Activity and Policy Notification
- Monitoring and Compliance Information
- Underground Injection Control: Rulemaking Activity and Program Notification
- Operator Certification Program: Drinking Water and Wastewater
- Electronic Reporting: Lab Reporting or Water System Reporting