

**3745-7-15 Expiration and renewal of professional operator certification.**

- (A) All professional operator certificates shall expire on December thirty-first of the second year after the year in which the certification is issued or renewed. The certificate will expire unless renewed in accordance with this rule before the expiration date.
- (B) The director shall send a renewal notice to the certified professional operator's latest address of record prior to the expiration date of the certificate. Failure to receive such notice shall not relieve the certified professional operator of the responsibility to renew the certificate. The professional operator shall notify the agency of changes in contact information including but not limited to phone number, email address and street address.
- (C) Requirements for renewal.
- (1) Beginning with certificates that expire on December 31, 2018, all renewal applications shall be submitted electronically in a format approved by the director.
  - (2) In order to renew a certificate before it expires, a certified professional operator shall submit a complete application to the director by November thirtieth of the year the certification expires. The submission shall include the following:
    - (a) A complete application for renewal, in a format provided by the director.
    - (b) A nonrefundable, nontransferable fee as set forth in section 3745.11 of the Revised Code.
    - (c) When requested by the director, any documentation necessary to prove attendance at appropriate contact hour courses.
    - (d) Any other form required by state law.
  - (3) For a holder of multiple certificates within a category, the director shall only renew the certificate representing the highest classification within the field.
  - (4) To renew a certificate issued under this chapter, the certified professional operator shall complete the number of director-approved contact hours required by paragraph (D) of this rule during each renewal cycle.
- (D) Contact hours.
- (1) Professional operators holding a single certificate are required to complete the following contact hours:
    - (a) For a class A or a limited class A professional operator, a minimum of eight director-approved contact hours.
    - (b) For a public water system professional operator I, water distribution professional operator I, water distribution professional operator II, wastewater works professional operator I, wastewater collection system professional operator I, or wastewater collection system professional operator II, a minimum of twelve director-approved contact hours.
    - (c) For a public water system professional operator II, public water system professional operator III, public water system professional operator IV, wastewater works professional operator II, wastewater works professional operator III, or wastewater works professional operator IV, a minimum of twenty-four director-approved contact hours.

- (2) Professional operators holding multiple certificates shall have the number of contact hours required for the renewal of each certificate reduced by twenty-five per cent. The reductions shall be granted as follows:
  - (a) For persons holding a certificate as a class A water supply or limited class A water supply professional operator and a class A wastewater works or a limited class A wastewater works professional operator, not less than six hours of director-approved contact hours shall be completed for each of these certificates.
  - (b) For persons holding certificates as a public water system professional operator I, water distribution professional operator I, water distribution professional operator II, wastewater works professional operator I, wastewater collection system professional operator I, or wastewater collection system professional operator II, not less than nine hours of director-approved contact hours shall be completed for each of these certificates.
  - (c) For persons holding certificates as a public water system professional operator II, public water system professional operator III, public water system professional operator IV, wastewater works professional operator II, wastewater works professional operator III, or wastewater works professional operator IV, not less than eighteen hours of director-approved contact hours shall be completed for each of these certificates.
- (3) At least half of a professional operator's contact hours shall be those determined by the director to be directly related to operations and maintenance.
- (4) The minimum required number of director-approved contact hours shall be completed during the two-year period preceding the expiration date of the certificate, except as provided in paragraph (I) of this rule.
- (5) A maximum of one contact hour per renewal cycle may be earned if a certified professional operator provides proof of individual membership in a state or national trade organization related to the field in which the professional operator holds a certificate.
- (6) A contact hour course may only be used once per renewal cycle for credit toward the contact hour requirements established in this paragraph.
- (7) A professional operator holding multiple certificates may not use a contact hour course for credit on more than one certificate, unless that professional operator has attended multiple sessions of that course. However, a course's contact hours may be split among multiple certificate renewals.
- (8) In addition to the contact hour requirements above, all professional operators shall acknowledge completion of a review of the "Ohio EPA Professional Operator Certification Training" course. This course will outline rule requirements that are specific to certified professional operators.
- (9) Upon request, an applicant for renewal of a certificate shall submit documentation of attendance at approved contact hour training to the director with the renewal application.
- (10) The holder of a certificate expiring as the result of a failure to obtain the contact hours required by this rule may apply for renewal, provided that the certificate will not be renewed until the applicant has met the contact hour requirements and submitted a late fee in accordance with division (O) of section 3745.11 of the Revised Code. These contact hour requirements shall be met within six months after the expiration date of the certificate or the certificate shall not be renewed. If a professional operator has not submitted a renewal application by the expiration date of the certificate, the professional operator shall not be the professional operator of record of a public water system, treatment works, or sewerage system

until such time as a renewal certificate is issued. Contact hours accrued to meet the certificate renewal requirements pursuant to this paragraph shall not count as contact hours for the next certificate renewal.

(E) Contact hour course approval.

(1) All training for the purpose of obtaining contact hours shall be approved by the director.

(a) Training providers shall submit requests for approval of training prior to the training event or within thirty days after completion of the training event. Training providers or professional operators may request approval of college courses, out-of-state training, or correspondence courses within thirty days of the completion of the training in a format approved by the director.

(b) Approval of training shall be based on the following:

(i) The amount of time an operator receives active instruction. At a minimum, a course shall contain at least 0.5 hours of active instruction.

(ii) Identification and qualifications of the instructor, who shall have at least three years of experience in the subject for which they are providing training, or equivalent experience as determined by the director.

(iii) Content of the training, which for courses over one hour in length, shall include an agenda which distinguishes training time from breaks and syllabus which describes the course. The syllabus shall include one method for verifying attendance. The following methods may be used to verify attendance:

(a) Classroom course:

(i) A sign-in sheet with the date, course name, time of course in military time, printed name of operator, signed name of operator and core person ID of operator.

(ii) Completion certificate that includes the course date, course name, course approval number, name of training provider, signature of person verifying attendance, name of operator and core person ID of operator.

(iii) Any other method for verification approved by the director.

(b) Correspondence course:

Completion certificate that includes the course date, course name, name of training provider, signature of person verifying attendance and name of operator.

(c) Web-based course, which shall be interactive and not static or pre-recorded:

(i) Results of an interactive test given during the course for comprehension.

(ii) A report of how long a student had the course as their main screen. A student is considered in attendance for the course if the report indicates ninety per cent of the time was spent with the course as the main screen.

(iii) Completion certificate that includes the course date, course name, name of training provider, signature of person verifying attendance and name of operator.

(d) Webinars:

- (i) Documentation of periodic interactivity.
  - (ii) Documentation that an operator has spent a minimum of ninety per cent of the time with the webinar as the active window on the computer or some other method for verification approved by the director.
  - (iii) Completion certificate that includes the course date, course name, name of training provider, signature of person verifying attendance and name of operator.
- (iv) Applicability and relevance of the training to the operation or management of a public water system or treatment facility, water distribution system, treatment works, or sewerage system.

(c) Determination of course credit:

- (i) For classroom courses and webinars, course credit shall be based on the amount of active instruction during the course. A maximum of fifteen minutes of questions and answers may be counted as active instruction.
- (ii) For correspondence and web-based courses, course credit shall be based on one of the following:
  - (a) A standardized process using two minutes of time per page of text, one minute of time for practice problems or exercises and one minute of time for quiz or exam questions.
  - (b) Documentation of beta-testing of at least one hundred individuals to determine the average length of time to complete the course.
  - (c) A method that provides equivalent evaluation of instructional time as approved by the director.

(d) Courses shall expire three years following the last scheduled date of the course.

(e) Training providers shall maintain all records associated with approved contact hour courses for a minimum of three years from the date of the course.

- (2) All training providers shall notify the agency of subsequent sessions of an approved training course either prior to or within thirty days of the training in a format approved by the director. Failure to notify may result in the withdrawal of approval for the course. Submission of a new training date shall extend the course expiration date by three years from the date of the training.
- (3) Within thirty days of the effective date of this rule, all training providers shall electronically submit attendance documentation in a format approved by the director. Course attendance records shall be submitted within sixty days of the completion of the course.
- (4) The director may approve courses that have been approved by other operator certification organizations, provided the process is consistent with Ohio EPA's process as identified in this rule. After Ohio EPA verifies consistency, the training provider shall electronically submit course applications and attendance data.
- (5) In the event training providers or professional operators, approved through the process described in paragraph (E) of this rule, do not follow the provisions in paragraph (E) of this rule, the director shall not approve new training courses for a period of up to two years. The director may refuse to recognize

an approved training course for contact hour credit if a training provider fails to meet the criteria listed in paragraphs (E)(1) and (E)(3) of this rule.

(F) Approval to issue trainer-specific contact hour course approval numbers.

- (1) As an alternative to the process listed in paragraph (E) of this rule, training providers may request approval to issue trainer-specific contact hour course approval numbers on a form acceptable to the director, provided the training providers do the following:
  - (a) Provide training that is applicable to the operation or management of a public water system, treatment works, or sewerage system.
  - (b) Use instructors who have at least three years experience in the subject for which they are providing training, or equivalent expertise as determined by the director.
  - (c) Have provided courses approved by the agency in accordance with paragraph (E) of this rule for a minimum of three years.
  - (d) Have been previously approved to provide a minimum of twelve contact hours.
  - (e) Assign each contact hour course provided with a unique number that identifies the provider, field, course number, and subject.
  - (f) Maintain attendance records, an agenda which distinguishes training time from breaks and lunches, a course syllabus and instructor qualifications for each course given for a period of three years from the date of training.
  - (g) Assign contact hours only for the amount of time spent on training. Training providers shall not issue certificates of completion for a number of hours different than that assigned to an approved training course.
  - (h) Assign a subject to each course (i.e., operation and maintenance or other).
  - (i) Provide the director with a list of scheduled training, in a format acceptable to the director, by the first day of the month for each month that training is offered. This list shall include the name of the course, the training provider's approval number, the instructor's name, subject, date, and location of the training, along with the number of contact hours assigned.
  - (j) Upon request, be capable of providing a record of student training to the agency or the student.
- (2) Training providers approved through the process described in paragraph (F)(1) of this rule shall be designated green leaf training providers.
- (3) In the event a green leaf training provider does not provide a list of scheduled training by the first day of the month, the green leaf training provider shall submit course approval applications in accordance with paragraph (E) of this rule. If course approval applications are not submitted, the training shall not be considered for the renewal of a certificate.
- (4) In the event a green leaf training provider has given a trainer-specific contact hour course number to a course that has not been given and the course changes, due to adjustments in the length of the presentation or instructor, the green leaf training provider shall notify Ohio EPA within two business days of the change.

- (5) When a green leaf training provider course has been previously provided to operators and changes due to adjustments in the length of the presentation, the green leaf training provider shall create a new approval number and notify Ohio EPA in accordance with the requirements set forth in this rule.
- (6) Green leaf training provider courses shall expire three years following the last scheduled date of the course.
- (7) Within thirty days of the effective date of this rule, all green leaf training providers shall electronically submit attendance documentation in a format provided by the director. Course attendance records shall be submitted within thirty days of the completion of the course.
- (8) Failure to meet any of the criteria in paragraph (F) of this rule may result in the withdrawal of the director's approval for all contact hour course training given by the green leaf training provider for a period of up to two years. For training providers who have not received approval in accordance with paragraph (F) of this rule, the director shall not approve new contact hour course training for a period of up to two years. The director may refuse to recognize contact hour credit for approved courses if a training provider fails to meet the requirements of paragraphs (F)(1) and (F)(2) of this rule.
- (G) All training providers shall allow agency representatives to attend courses at any time for the purpose of reviewing the length of training, training content and other relevant aspects of the training. Agency employees shall not use this provision to obtain contact hours.
- (H) The director shall not renew the professional operator certificate of an applicant failing to meet the requirements of this rule.
- (I) A renewal card indicating the valid dates of the renewed professional operator certificate shall be issued to all certified professional operators who have met the renewal requirements of this rule.
- (J) Upon submission of a complete application, an expired professional operator certificate can be renewed within six months of the expiration date, subject to all the requirements and conditions of paragraph (C) of this rule and division (O) of section 3745.11 of the Revised Code. In all cases the expiration date of the renewed professional operator certificate shall be the same as if the renewal requirements had been met on or before the date of expiration. After the expiration date and prior to renewal according to this paragraph, the professional operator shall not perform those activities requiring a certificate.
- (K) A professional operator's certificate that has not been renewed within six months of the expiration date shall not be renewed. In such cases, the former certificate holder shall apply for examination, pay all required fees, and pass the examination in order to obtain certification.
- (L) In the event that a professional operator is not able to meet the contact hour requirements of this rule due to a personal life threatening illness or military service the director may, upon request, grant an extension for achieving the required contact hours. However, the professional operator shall not be the professional operator of record of a public water system, treatment works, or sewerage system until such time as the contact hour requirements are fulfilled and a renewal certificate is issued.
- (M) The director shall audit a representative number of renewal applications in order to document compliance with the contact hour requirements.

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