



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

- ▶ EPA established The National Tribal Drinking Water Operator Certification Program (75 Fed Reg 48329, August 10, 2010) using the authority to establish a Tribal Operator Certification Program through its direct implementation authority set forth in Public Law No. 105-65, 111 Stat.1334, 1374 (1997) and 42 U.S.C. 300j-2(a)(8).

### **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
- The program provides No-cost pathways to appropriate professional certification as an alternative to state certification.

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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