

# Operator Certification Working Group

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### NDWAC Operator Certification Working Group "The Partnership"

#### September 22-23 Meeting

##### I. Background

The fourth meeting of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC) Operator Certification Working Group (the Partnership) was held on September 22-23, 1997 in Washington, D.C. Thirteen members were present for both days and two members were present for one of the two days. Members Bauman, Bergener, Cohen, Crawford, Rivard, Rosenberg, Sass, and Seifert were unable to attend either day. However, members Cohen and Sass submitted comments prior to the meeting indicating their positions on some of the issues covered during the two-day meeting.

##### II. Meeting Summary

The Partnership spent the first day of the meeting reviewing and commenting on the remaining issue papers from the August meeting. The remaining papers included: Certification Renewal, Resources Needed to Implement the Program, Recertification, Stakeholder Involvement, and Program Review. Additionally, the group reconsidered the baseline standard on Enforcement to address the issue of nonprimacy States.

At the start of the second day, there was a lengthy discussion on the issues associated with Indian Tribes. The Partnership unanimously agreed that all users of public water supplies are entitled to safe water and that operator certification is an important component in ensuring that basic need. Recognizing that the SDWA is silent as to whether the operator certification guidelines apply to Indian Tribes, the majority of workgroup members supported a recommendation that EPA seek clarification and resolve this omission. Furthermore, the group recommended that EPA consult with the Tribal governments prior to taking action on operator certification issues that impact Tribes or Tribal systems, using the operator certification baseline standards to initiate these discussions.

Next the group reconsidered the baseline standard on Classification of Systems, Facilities, and Operators to address the issue of size categories. There was significant discussion over the requirements of "very small systems" and the issue of whether or not exemptions should be permitted. The group finally concurred that no changes were necessary, and that the baseline standard, as written, would be forwarded to the NDWAC.

The Partnership drafted language to include in an introduction to the baseline standards and recommendations package for the NDWAC. The Partnership unanimously supported a recommendation to the NDWAC that the Partnership not be discharged at this time and that it be available to review and comment on the Draft EPA Operator Certification Guidelines and public review comments.

The National Research Council's report entitled Safe Water From Every Tap was also discussed. Excerpts from this report have been included in the information package developed by the Partnership in accordance with §1420 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). As a result of this discussion, the group unanimously agreed to add language to the cover letter of the information package that makes it clear

that materials in this package are included for information only and should not be construed as endorsed by the working group, nor should they be considered guidance or regulation.

Additionally, the Partnership considered the issue of reimbursement from §1419(d)(3) of the SDWA. The group unanimously supported a recommendation that the full, annual appropriation of \$30 million should be allocated to reimburse persons operating systems serving 3,300 persons or fewer for the costs of training and certification.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Partnership members drafted a letter to Administrator Browner expressing their appreciation to the staff of EPA and the contractor who supported their efforts.

### III. Next Steps