

MPCA COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE IN WASTEWATER OPERATOR TRAINING AND SUPPORT OF OPERATOR CERTIFICATION AND RENEWAL NEEDS

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Certification and Training Program thanks the Minnesota Wastewater Operators Association (MWOA) for this opportunity to address concerns expressed in the MWOA Executive Board in its fall 2017 MWOA “Wastewatcher” meeting minutes (Volume 64 Number 3). The MPCA wants to reaffirm its commitment to continued excellence in wastewater operator training, and its commitment to offer exams and process certifications and certification renewals.

The MWOA Executive Board raised two concerns in the fall 2017 Wastewatcher newsletter, which we will address in turn:

- (1) The newsletter stated that the MPCA was dramatically cutting back on training opportunities and hours of available training, including Type IV and V operator training. We want to assure the MWOA that the MPCA is not planning to make any cutbacks to our training program.
- (2) The newsletter also expressed concern about the MPCA’s timely processing of certification renewals and staffing to support certification and exam offerings. The MPCA is issuing certification renewals in a timely manner and, as noted above, is fully committed to continuing the current training and exam offerings. We also provide a list of current staff and areas of expertise below.

(1) MPCA CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO ALL LEVELS OF WASTEWATER OPERATOR TRAINING. The MPCA has no plans to cut back our training programs. The training, including Type IV and V, will continue at current levels. Our training priorities in 2018 include:

- sustaining our current training events
- updating need to know criteria for wastewater courses
- Developing and updating wastewater exams
- tailoring training events to meet the demographics and needs of Minnesota’s wastewater industry, and
- evolving course curriculum to keep pace with new treatment processes, new technologies, and changing wastewater treatment standards.

We agree that it is important to establish stronger communications with the MWOA and other industry organizations as we work on these priorities, and we are committed to a more collaborative partnership.

The MPCA would like to address our commitment to Type IV and V training specifically.

Type IV Training. The concern about reduced Type 4 training may be related to our decision in 2017 to combine two Type IV basic courses into one class. We combined courses not to cut back training, but to offer a more effective training that better meets operator needs. Our training team developed a new, updated curriculum. The MPCA scheduled the new class at a facility specifically equipped to accommodate double the regular number of operators. In 2018, we will again offer two Type IV basic courses and three Type IV refresher classes. One of the Type IV refresher classes will take place at the MPCA annual conference in March 2018. These training efforts will continue in 2018 and beyond with no cutbacks. We will continue to monitor our training to see if further modification or expansion is appropriate.

Type V Training. Type V training was canceled in 2017 because the host facility canceled and we were unable to reschedule that event. We notified the affected industrial operators of the cancellation and directed them to alternative training courses. We are working with the University of Minnesota in 2018 to provide Type V training. We will announce dates and post information on our website in the coming months. The MPCA will continue to manage the Type V course logistics, registrations, and continuing education credits for certification.

The MPCA will continue our commitment to ensure there are training opportunities to maintain Type V certification; we will continue to direct operators to alternative training courses until we have a sustainable solution.

(2) MPCA IS PROCESSING CERTIFICATIONS AND RENEWALS ON TIME. The fall Newsletter also indicated a concern that the MPCA was not issuing certifications in a timely manner. Our program has experienced some staffing and technology changes recently, and we apologize if some of our services were slower while new staff gained experience with program needs and the new technology. We are confident in our ability to provide quality customer service at this point. A list of staff and their areas of expertise is provided below:

Lisa Heesch, Training Coordinator

- Managing administrative functions such as scheduling, class registration, publications, contracting

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Please feel welcome to reach out to any of the MPCA Training and Certification staff with questions. We look forward to doing this work in collaboration with MWOA and other partners.