

## Class D Certification for Small Systems

*By Jennifer Koenig, MRWA NTNC Technical Advisor*

I have been working for Minnesota Rural Water Association (MRWA) for over 16 years and have met some very fun and interesting people during my travels. I work with nontransient noncommunity public water systems which include places like schools, businesses, daycare facilities and factories. Most of these systems are classified as Class E systems but there are a number of Class D systems and a few Class C systems. Let's review what constitutes Class E and Class D public water systems.

Class D	Class E
A small groundwater system that has chemical addition, uses treatment processes, <u>OR</u> has a population greater than 500.	A groundwater system that has a population under 500, and does not add chemicals or have any type of treatment (i.e. such as arsenic, radium, or nitrate removal) for State of Minnesota compliance.

In the past few years, a number of the operations specialists that I met when I first started working for MRWA have retired or are getting ready to retire in the next year or two. Many of the operations specialists that have retired in the past year made sure to get another operations specialist certified prior to their retirement. Others did not! I have visited with a number of you recently about how to get another operations specialist certified. Many of you are from schools or businesses that are classified as Class D public water systems. For some of you, you needed to explain to your supervisors about water operator certification because they were unaware of the requirements for getting certified in Minnesota. Let's review the requirements for getting certified.

### **Minimum Requirements to Apply for Certification for Class D and E Operations Specialists**

- Must have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Class D applicants must have at least one year of experience in the operation of a Class A, B, C, or D system.
- Class E applicants must have at least three months of experience in the operation of a Class A, B, C, D, or E system.

As you can see, getting certified as a Class D water operations specialist is tougher than Class E because it requires more water operations experience and more knowledge about water operations. This is why it's important to plan ahead when you need to get an operations specialist certified at the Class D level (or higher). For those of you who are planning on retiring soon, it is a good idea to get a plan in place on who will get certified and when they need to take the exam.

### **Application Process:**

- Complete and mail an exam application to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) with the \$32 exam fee. **The application deadline is 15 days prior to the exam date.**
- Pass an exam prepared by MDH. Upon notification of passing the exam, pay the \$23 certificate issuance fee.
- Upon receiving the issuance fee, MDH will issue the certificate.

### **Study Materials**

There is a Class D Study Guide available for operations specialists who are planning on taking the Class D exam. Throughout the year, there are some exam prep classes offered for operations specialists looking for some help in studying for the exam. These classes are somewhere between 1-2 days and the exam is given on the day following the exam prep class. These classes are offered by MRWA and the Minnesota Section of the American Water Works Association. I would strongly encourage any operations specialist planning on taking the Class D exam to start studying as soon as possible. Don't wait to study until the week before the exam!

### **Contract Operations**

Please plan ahead when thinking about operator certification at the Class D (or higher) level. It may require educating your supervisor about the certification requirements and contract operations so they can make informed decisions about getting a new operations specialist certified. One question that has come up during my visits to systems in this situation is contract operations. This came up at a school recently and we discussed that if the school didn't have one of their employees (that works with the water system) take the exam, they would need to contract with an operations specialist that had at least a Class D water certificate. One benefit to having the school employee as the water operations specialist is that they know the water system better than anyone!

Each water system has to do what is best for them and it may be that for your system, contracting may be the best option. For instance, there is a small church school in rural Minnesota that contracts with an operations specialist from a nearby town. They are a Class D system because they have a fairly complex arsenic removal system for their public water supply. The people that take care of maintenance at the church and school are all volunteers and so for this system, it made sense to contract with an operations specialist. For others, it may be best to have an employee take the Class D exam and be the certified water operations specialist for the system. Please feel free to contact me at 800-367-6792 if you would like more information about getting new operations specialist certified at any level. You can also contact Noel Hansen at the Minnesota Department of Health at 651-201-4690 for more information. The MDH Drinking Water Operator Certification web site <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/water/wateroperator/index.htm> also has more information including the exam application, upcoming exam dates and information on contract operations.