



WEF Looking Toward Maintenance Professionals Certification

Water and Wastewater maintenance professionals today must confront a wider variety of technology issues than in the past and therefore must possess an extensive knowledge of the many facets of industrial maintenance. Position descriptions are designed to validate that individuals possess the professional expertise and knowledge required to successfully perform plant and facilities maintenance activities according to the most current professional standards. More than ever before the roles of Water and Wastewater maintenance professionals involve diverse issues and concerns as organizations work to improve and grow. Yet there are few industry accepted certification programs for maintenance technicians, specifically relating to water and wastewater. The EPA state offices provide licensing and training programs for Collection System Operation, Cross-Connection Inspection, Water and Wastewater Laboratory Testing, and Water and Wastewater Treatment Works Operation, but do not currently sanction such programs for agency maintenance professionals.

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) is proposing a partnership with the Association of Boards and Certification (ABC) in developing a standardized Plant Maintenance Technologist certification program for drinking water and wastewater plant maintenance personnel. The Association of Boards of Certification has been assisting states and provinces with environmental certification programs since 1972. Their membership consists of over 90 certifying authorities representing more than 45 states and 10 Canadian provinces which certify over 150,000 water and wastewater operators, laboratory analysts, and backflow prevention assembly testers. The survey program will cover all facets of treatment plant maintenance. Effective plant maintenance is a key component to every treatment facility so WEF is excited about partnering in this new program!

ABC in participation with WEF is seeking personnel involved in the day-to-day maintenance of treatment facilities to complete a job analysis survey. Participation from plant maintenance personnel is essential to develop a quality, valid certification program. In the survey, participants will be asked to rate a list of job tasks and their associated knowledge and abilities for frequency of performance and consequences of inaccurate performance. The results of the survey will be used to determine what is both appropriate and required to cover on Plant Maintenance Technologist certification exams that are developed through ABC. When exam development is complete, voluntary certification through ABC will be available through WEF in local jurisdictions, as IEPA is not currently a member of ABC.

Participation in the on-line survey is limited to personnel currently working in the water and wastewater maintenance field and can be completed through June 13, 2007. Individuals interested should send an e-mail to testing@abccert.org. In your message, please include "Please forward information to participate in the on-line Plant Maintenance Technologist survey", and the on-line survey will be returned to you along with an access code. The survey takes between 20-60 minutes, and determines what maintenance tasks you personally perform and level of importance you currently place on each. Individual responses provided on the survey will be seen only by those involved in processing the survey, and those involved in developing and validating the certification examinations. No date is given for implementation of certification exams, but is believed to be late in 2007.

Though the Instrumentation, Systems, and Automation Society (ISA) has maintenance industry recognized programs for Certified Automation Professional (CAP), Certified Control System Technician (CCST), and Certified Industrial Maintenance Mechanic (CIMM), none is recognized by WEF, EPA, or IEPA for examination equivalency, or license reciprocity. WEF expresses optimism that the state sections of EPA will initiate licensing programs based on the resulting ABC developed certification exam and program where they do not currently exist.

I believe that a WEF endorsed Maintenance Technician certification program in both Water and Wastewater maintenance is long overdue, will provide additional benefit to staff retention, industry specific technical development, and provide another tool to bolster the programs of the CSWEA.