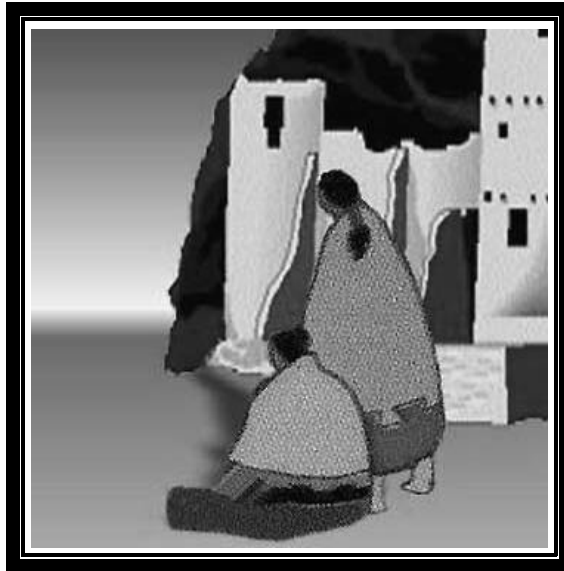




TRIBAL OPERATOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM DRAFT GUIDELINES



PUBLIC COMMENT DRAFT

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Introduction

- A. Purpose**
- B. Program Description**
- C. Process for Developing Guidelines**

II. Key Certification Issues

- A. Voluntary Program and Grant Conditions**
- B. State Certification**
- C. Grandparenting of Operators**
- D. Classification of Systems**
- E. Operator Training**
- F. Exemptions**
- G. Time Frame**

III. Draft Operator Certification Guidelines

- A. Public Health Objectives**
- B. Baseline Standards**
 - 1. Classification of Systems, Facilities and Operators**
 - 2. Operator Qualifications**
 - 3. Program Implementation**
 - 4. Certification Renewal**
 - 5. Resources Needed to Implement the Program**
 - 6. Recertification**
 - 7. Stakeholder Involvement and Program Review**

IV. Submittal Process for Certification Providers

- 1. Submittal Schedule**
- 2. Submittal Contents**

V. Definitions

VI. Acronyms

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Amendments of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-182) direct the Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in cooperation with the States, to develop guidelines specifying minimum standards for certification and recertification of operators of community and nontransient noncommunity public water systems. EPA must withhold 20 percent of a State's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) grant unless the State adopts and implements an operator certification program that meets the guidelines. This withholding provision does not apply to Tribes but, because having a certified operator is a key factor in public health protection, EPA is developing, in cooperation with Tribes, a voluntary tribal operator certification program.

The draft tribal operator certification program presented in this document is EPA's effort to establish a program for Tribes that will be both flexible while at the same time provide meaningful health protection to the drinking water community. The program is intended to provide Tribes with additional opportunities to become trained and certified. It also contains base standards for organizations certifying operators of tribal systems in order for that certification organization to become "EPA approved." In addition, the program will establish a consistent method for EPA to assess, track, and address certification and training needs on tribal lands. Even though this is a voluntary program and an initiative EPA has pursued without specific mandates, EPA has included a goal on operator certification in the new Office of Water (OW) tribal strategy "Protecting Public Health and Water Resources in Indian Country: A Strategy for EPA/Tribal Partnership." The goal reads: "By 2005, 80% of tribal community and nontransient noncommunity water systems will have a certified operator." Establishing a tribal operator certification program will help achieve this goal and bring greater health protection to tribal communities.

B. Program Description

The purpose of this operator certification program is to increase training and certification of personnel operating tribal drinking water systems - specifically community and nontransient noncommunity systems. EPA encourages tribal operators to become certified because it provides a greater level of health protection to the public. Although this certification program is voluntary EPA will require a Tribe to have, or agree to obtain within a specific time frame, a certified operator/s available to their drinking water systems in order to secure funds in some grant programs. One such grant program that will have this requirement is the Drinking Water Infrastructure Grant Tribal Set-Aside (DWIG TSA) program. This requirement will take effect once the tribal operator certification program is finalized. The 1996 SDWA Amendments direct the Administrator to set-aside 1½ percent of the amount appropriated for the DWSRF program for use on systems that serve Indian Tribes. Thus far, the DWIG TSA program has been appropriated approximately fifty million dollars to provide infrastructure grants to tribal public water systems.

Tribal operators can go to State certification programs to become certified, since the State programs will be reviewed by EPA to ensure they meet base standards. Tribal operators can also go to any other certification provider that meets the baseline standards outlined in these guidelines and has received EPA approval. There will be a two year grace period upon finalization of the guidelines when certification from unapproved State and non-State programs will be accepted as meeting the grant conditions for a certified operator. This will provide time for EPA to review and approve certification programs. Once these guidelines are finalized, any current certification provider (other than States) or any organization interested in establishing a certification program can submit their programs to EPA for review and approval. All States must submit their operator certification programs to EPA on or before February 2001.

EPA will be responsible for implementing this voluntary operator certification program. EPA is developing a tracking system for identifying what systems are certified and will continue to track system compliance.

C. Process for Developing Program Guidelines

EPA HQ and Regions discussed possible approaches to developing an operator certification program for Tribes. The State operator certification baseline standards were presented and changes were made to reflect special considerations for the tribal program. These discussions were then presented at the 1998 Annual Native American Water Association (NAWA) Conference and comments were solicited. Most comments received at the meeting were positive and there was general agreement that such a program could be useful in Indian Country. EPA continued with several additional internal reviews and presented the draft program at the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW) Tribal Consultation meeting in February of 1999. EPA continued presenting the draft program at other tribal meetings such as the 1999 Annual National Tribal Environmental Council (NTEC) Conference to solicit comments. In addition, EPA coordinated with other Federal Agencies and sought their recommendations. A notification of availability for the final draft guidelines is being published in the Federal Register and copies of the draft guidelines are being sent to stakeholders as well as all federally recognized Tribes whose drinking water program is regulated by EPA for comment. Once comments are received and appropriate changes are made, EPA will finalize the guidelines. A copy of the final guidelines will be sent to all appropriate federally recognized Tribes.

II. Key Certification Issues

During the development of the guidelines, the EPA debated a number of programmatic and certification issues. Included here, as background for the reader, is discussion of the key issues along with a brief explanation of how each issue was addressed.

A. Voluntary Program and Grant Conditions

Concern was raised as to whether this operator certification program is mandatory for tribal systems. There is no statutory requirement that tribal systems have a certified operator, consequently, this is a voluntary program. However, DWIG TSA guidelines state that after EPA

has developed an operator certification program for Tribes, any system to be assisted with DWIG TSA funds must be operated by adequately trained and certified operators in order for a Tribe to receive a grant. Many comments were received asking for flexibility in this requirement. Several commenters suggested EPA require the Tribes to train and certify an operator within a certain time frame of receiving a grant, rather than requiring an operator already certified in order to receive a grant. It was explained that in some cases the certified operator of the tribal water system may leave the system without notice and such circumstances do not justify disqualifying a Tribe for DWIG TSA grants. EPA has determined that a certified operator is needed to help meet the statutory requirement that DWIG TSA grantees have the technical, financial, and managerial capability to maintain their system. At the same time EPA agrees that providing flexibility in the operator certification requirement is appropriate. EPA Regions should make the determination as to whether flexibility in the requirement is appropriate for the specific Tribe. This determination should be based on compliance records, past operator certification status, and current interest in system capacity building. In no case should a DWIG TSA grant be issued to a Tribe without some immediate plans to train and certify a drinking water system operator.

Other drinking water grants may also require the grantees have a certified operator in order to receive funding. Regions will have the flexibility to issue such a requirement for drinking water grants other than the DWIG TSA. Headquarters does highly recommend that Regions incorporate training and/or certification into any drinking water grant supporting a system without a certified operator when feasible.

B. State Certification

Many people were concerned that this new program would not recognize State certification for tribal systems and would force Tribes to seek certification at specific EPA approved certification providers. The goal of this program is to protect public health by providing more opportunities for operators of tribal systems to become certified. We understand that many tribal operators choose to be trained and certified by State programs and we do not want to take away that option. State certification at the appropriate classification level will be recognized and will satisfy any operator certification grant condition requirement assuming the State program meets baseline standards developed for State programs.

C. Grandparenting of Operators

The terminology “grandparenting of operators,” as used in the context of these draft guidelines, means exempting operators from meeting all the initial certification requirements such as needing a high school education or equivalent and passing an exam. EPA believes that grandparenting may be necessary to allow many competent operators who have been successfully operating water systems but who may not meet the initial certification requirements to continue to work. In these situations the operator could be certified through grandparenting but then would have to meet all of the requirements for certification renewal (including training) in order to remain certified. EPA believes that public health is best protected by encouraging as many operators as possible to become certified and will decide on a case by case basis which operators running systems that will receive DWIG TSA assistance should be grandparented.

System size and compliance history are some criteria that will be used to determine whether a system's operator can be grandparented. There are some restrictions for this grandparenting clause:

- The system owner should apply to the appropriate EPA Region for grandparenting for the operator(s) in responsible charge within two years of the effective date of these guidelines. The EPA Region will send a letter stating its determination as to whether the operator is eligible for grandparent status. If the operator is determined to be eligible for grandparent status by the EPA Region, the operator still needs to seek certification from a provider that has a grandparenting clause in their guidelines. EPA Regions may need to assist the Tribes in finding such a provider and may have to collaborate with certification providers during this process.
- The certification of the grandparented operator will be site specific and non-transferable to other operators.
- If the classification of the plant or distribution system changes to a higher level, then the grandparented certification will no longer be valid.
- If a grandparented operator chooses to work for a different water system, he or she needs to meet the initial certification requirements for that system and will lose their grandparent status.

Also, EPA asks that certification providers pay special attention to identify specific certification renewal requirements for grandparented operators to ensure they have the knowledge, skill, ability and judgement to operate the system for which they were grandparented. EPA Regions should collaborate with the certification providers in this process since Regions are responsible for tracking system compliance and enforcement.

D. Classification of Systems

EPA initially agreed that it should be the responsibility of the program providers to classify systems. However, later discussions led to a consensus that classification should be the responsibility of EPA, since it would promote consistency among the Regions. It would be extremely difficult for EPA to implement aspects of the certification program if all of the providers had different classification systems.

EPA realizes that State classification systems will most likely differ from the classification system EPA uses in these guidelines. EPA also realizes that many tribal operators go to States for training and certification and does not expect States to change their classification system in order to certify tribal water system operators. In cases where tribal water system operators obtain State certification EPA will, consequently, accept the classification used by the State program.

E. Operator Training

The group discussed whether the guidelines should specify the types and amount of training required for each classification level to ensure national consistency or whether the guidelines should ask certification providers to specify their own training requirements. It was agreed that flexibility in training requirements is necessary, consequently, EPA will leave the training requirements up to the certification provider and in EPA's review of the various certification programs, ensure consistency among providers. Training should be accepted in a variety of forms.

F. Exemptions

The group discussed whether small or certain types of systems should be exempt from the condition to have a certified operator. Some suggested that EPA exempt some systems such as small water systems with little or no treatment from the provision to have a certified operator. EPA believes that one of the most important benefits of these guidelines will be improved training for small system operators and consequently, better public health protection for the consumers served by small systems. Historically, compliance problems are much more widespread in smaller systems and these systems may benefit most by training. Congress also recognized this when it established the operator certification provisions for States. As discussed in the legislative history of these provisions (S. Rep. 104-169, 104th Cong., 1st Sess at 61), Congress was aware that most States already had operator certification programs and that many exempted small systems. Congress was particularly concerned that the lack of operator training and certification for small systems could create compliance problems. In addition, monitoring and sampling done by a trained operator are more likely to produce accurate results and be correctly interpreted. These concerns were central to the enactment of the operator certification provisions. EPA does recognize, however, that some small systems provide little or no treatment and that some nontransient noncommunity systems (e.g., schools) may not have distribution systems and that operators of these systems do not need the same type and amount of training that operators of larger systems may need. The guidelines, therefore, provide certification providers with discretion to tailor training requirements consistent with the level of complexity of systems, but do not provide exemption from certification.

The guidelines do not require these systems to have a certified operator on-site full time. Regions can implement a program that would allow for a circuit rider to be the certified operator for a number of small systems. This flexibility is provided for in the definition of "available" that is included in the guidelines. EPA believes that this language will reduce the financial burden on small systems, and allow for the sharing of certified operators in areas with a scarcity of qualified personnel. EPA Regions have flexibility in their interpretation of the term "available" since its meaning may differ due to the geographic and demographic differences throughout the nation.

G. Time Frame

Once comments are received on the final draft guidelines, EPA will make appropriate changes and finalize the guidelines. Upon finalization of the guidelines, any system receiving a DWIG

TSA grant will be required to have, or agree to have within a certain time frame, a trained and certified operator. EPA will recognize certification from *any* current certification provider including those that have not been reviewed by EPA since there will not have been sufficient time to solicit certification providers and review programs. Two years after the guidelines are finalized, any system receiving a DWIG TSA grant will be required to have, or agree to have within a certain time frame, certification from an “EPA approved” certification provider or from a State certification program that meets the baseline standards developed for States.

III. Draft Operator Certification Guidelines for Tribes

A. Public Health Objectives

The public health objectives of the guidelines are to ensure that:

- Customers of any tribal public water system be provided with an adequate supply of safe, potable drinking water.
- Consumers of tribal systems are confident that their water is safe to drink.
- Tribal public water system operators are trained and certified and that they have knowledge and understanding of the public health reasons for drinking water standards.

B. Baseline Standards

EPA asks that any operator certification program requesting EPA program approval under these guidelines address the following seven baseline standards. The baseline standards explain what the training/certification programs should include. They also outline EPA responsibilities.

1. Classification of Systems, Facilities and Operators

Classification of Systems and Facilities:

EPA is especially interested in soliciting comments on what type of classification system (for both distribution systems and treatment facilities) would be most appropriate for these tribal operator certification guidelines. Presented below are some options that EPA has considered. Please feel free to comment on these options or suggest alternative options.

OPTION 1

- EPA will classify all tribal community and nontransient noncommunity water systems based on the following classification systems (based on the Associated Board of Certification’s (ABC) Water Treatment Plant Point Rating System):

Distribution Systems

- Class I: 25 - 1,000 population served
- Class II: 1,001 - 3,300 population served
- Class III: ≥3,301 population served

Treatment Facilities

Note: A groundwater supply with only chlorination is considered a distribution system, not a water treatment facility.

- VSWS 30 points or less and a maximum population of 500
- Class I: 30 points or less
- Class II: 31-55 points
- Class III: 56 to 75 points
- Class IV: 76 points or greater

Item	Points
Size (2 point minimum to 20 point maximum)	
Maximum population or part served, peak day (1 point minimum to 10 point maximum)	1 pt per 10,000 or part
Design flow average day or peak month's part flow average day, whichever is larger (1 point minimum to 10 point maximum)	1 pt per MGD or part
Water supply sources	
Groundwater	3
Groundwater under the influence of surface water	5
Surface water	5
Average raw water quality varies enough to require treatment changes 10% of the time	0-10
•Little or no variation	0
•High variation. Raw water quality subject to periodic serious industrial waste pollution	10
Raw water quality is subject to or has elevated:	
•Taste and or/ odor levels	3
•Color levels	3
•Iron and/or manganese levels	5
•Turbidity levels	5

•Coliform and/or fecal counts	5
•Algal growths	5
Raw water quality is subject to periodic:	
•Industrial and commercial waste pollution	5
•Agricultural pollution	5
•Urban runoff, erosion, and storm water pollution	3
•Recreational use (boating, fishing, etc.)	2
•Urban development and residential land use pollution	2
Chemical Treatment/Additional Process	
Fluoridation	5
Disinfection	
•Gaseous chlorine	5
•Liquid or powdered chlorine	5
•Chlorine dioxide	5
•Ozonization (on-site generation)	10
pH adjustment* (Calcium carbonate, carbon dioxide, hydrochloric acid, calcium oxide, calcium hydroxide, sodium hydroxide, sulfuric acid, other)	5
Stability or Corrosion Control (Calcium oxide, calcium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, sodium hexametaphosphate, other)	10
Coagulation & Flocculation Process	
Chemical addition (1 point for each type of chemical coagulant added, maximum 5 points) (Aluminum sulfate, bauxite, ferrous sulfate, ferric sulfate, calcium oxide, bentonite, calcium carbonate, carbon dioxide, sodium silicate, other)	5
Rapid mix units	
•Mechanical mixers	3
•Injection mixers	2
•In-line blender mixers	2
Flocculation tanks	
•Hydraulic flocculators	2
•Mechanical flocculators	3
Clarification/Sedimentation Process	

Horizontal-flow (rectangular basins)	5
Horizontal-flow (round basins)	7
Up-flow solid-contact sedimentation	15
Inclined-plate sedimentation	10
Tube sedimentation	10
Dissolved air flotation	30
Filtration Process	
Single media filtration	3
Dual or mixed media filtration	5
Microscreens	5
Diatomaceous earth filters	5
Cartridge filters	5
Slow sand filters	5
Direct filtration	5
Pressure or greensand filtration	20
Other Treatment Processes	
Aeration	3
Packed tower aeration	5
Ion-exchange/softening	5
Lime-soda ash softening	20
Copper sulfate treatment	5
Powdered activated carbon	5
Special Processes (reverse osmosis, electrodialysis, other)	15
Residuals Disposal	
Discharge to lagoons	5
Discharge to lagoons and then raw water source	8
Discharge to raw water	10
Disposal to sanitary sewer	3
Mechanical dewatering	5

On-site disposal	5
Land application	5
Solids composting	5
Facility Characteristics	
Instrumentation	
•The use of SCADA or similar instrumentation systems to provide data with no process operation	0
•The use of SCADA or similar instrumentation systems to provide data with limited process operation	2
•The use of SCADA or similar instrumentation systems to provide data with moderate process operation	4
•The use of SCADA or similar instrumentation systems to provide data with extensive or total process operation	6
Clearwell size less than average day design flow	5

OPTION 2

Alternative Distribution System Classification Worksheet (use the same treatment facility classification worksheet as Option 1)

System Characteristics	Point Value	Calculation
Population = 3,300 or less	10	
Population = 3,301 to 10,000	15	
Population = 10,001 to 50,000	40	
Population = 50,001 or greater	60	
Pressure Zones 3 to 10	4	
Pressure Zones greater than 10	6	
Groundwater Source with Submersable	3	
Groundwater Source without Submersable	5	
Groundwater Sources*	8	
Single Disinfectant	5	
Multiple Disinfectant**	8	

System Characteristics	Point Value	Calculation
Pump Stations up to 50 HP	4	
Pump Stations greater than 50 HP	6	
Distribution Storage up to one day	6	
Distribution Storage more than one day	4	
Recycled Water Distribution	5	
System Characteristics Total =		

Instructions - In the “characteristics” that apply to your system place the proper point value in the calculation box. In Groundwater Source(s), Pump Stations, Pressure Zones and Distribution Storage select one calculation only (whichever applies). Total your calculations and refer to the classification matrix below to determine your system’s classification.

Notes:

* Groundwater Sources = necessary when two or more sources are blended to meet National Primary Drinking Water Standards.

** i.e., chlorine and chloramines

Distribution Systems Classification

Level I = up to 25

Level II = 26-50

Level III = 51-75

Level IV = 76 and up

OPTION 3

Alternative Distribution System Classification Worksheet (use the same treatment facility classification worksheet as Option 1)

VSWS: 25 - 100 population served

Level I: 100 - 3300 population served

Level II: 3301 - 10,000 population served

Level III: ≥ 10,000 population served

Operators

EPA will consider the following criteria when determining whether a system has a certified operator:

- EPA asks all owners of tribal community and nontransient noncommunity water systems to place the direct supervision of their water system, including each treatment facility and/or distribution system, under the responsible charge of an operator(s) holding a valid certification equal to or greater than the classification of the treatment facility and/or distribution system.
- At a minimum, the operator(s) in responsible charge must hold a valid certification equal to or greater than the classification of their water system, including each treatment facility and distribution system, as determined by EPA.
- EPA asks all operating personnel making process control/system integrity decisions about water quality or quantity that effect public health be certified.
- A designated certified operator must be available for each operating shift.

2. Operator Qualifications

An approved tribal operator certification program needs to require certified operators to:

- Take and pass an exam that demonstrates that the applicant has the necessary skills, knowledge, ability and judgement as appropriate for the classification. All exams must be validated.
- Have a high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma (GED). Certification providers may allow experience and/or relevant training to be substituted for a high school diploma or GED. Education, training, or experience that is used to meet this requirement for any class of certification may not be used to meet the experience requirement.
- Have the defined minimum amount of on-the-job experience for each appropriate level of certification. The amount of experience requested increases with each classification level. Post high school education may be substituted for experience. Credit may be given for experience in a related field (e.g., wastewater). Experience that is used to meet the experience requirement for any class of certification may not be used to meet the education requirement.

Grandparenting

EPA recognizes that there are many competent small system operators that may not meet the initial requirements to become certified. EPA believes that tribal utilities may need a transition period to allow these operators to continue to operate the system through "grandparenting" the requirements in some circumstances. Grandparenting determinations regarding systems that will receive DWIG TSA grants will be made by EPA on a case by case basis and will be based on factors such as system compliance history, operator experience and knowledge, system complexity, and lack of treatment. In these cases, responsibilities of the grandparenting provision fall upon both the providers and EPA Regions.

Provider's Responsibilities:

If certification providers choose to include a grandparenting provision in their programs, it should specify the following:

- After an operator is grandparented, ensure he or she has, within some time period specified by the certification provider, met all requirements to obtain certification renewal, including payment of any necessary fees, acquiring necessary training to meet the renewal requirements, and demonstrating the skills, knowledge, ability and judgement for that classification.
- Include special renewal requirements for grandparented operators to ensure they have the knowledge, skill, ability and judgement to operate the system for which they were grandparented.
- Base their decision to grandparent an operator on system size, operator experience and knowledge, system complexity, lack of treatment and compliance history. The certification provider should work closely with EPA to determine whether the operator, based on compliance history, should be grandparented.
- Work with EPA Regions in tracking training/renewal status. This may include providing EPA with a list of certification provided through the program and types of training provided.

EPA Responsibilities and General Grandparenting Restrictions:

- The system owner needs to apply to the appropriate EPA Region for grandparenting for the operator(s) in responsible charge within two years of the effective date of these guidelines. The EPA Region has the responsibility to review and accept/decline applications for the grandparenting eligibility.
- The EPA Region will send a letter stating its determination as to whether the system operator will be eligible for grandparent status. If the system is eligible,

this letter can be shown to the certification provider to allow the operator to be grandparented through their program.

- EPA will work with certification providers to determine the training/renewal status of operators.
- The certification of the grandparented operator is site specific and non-transferable to other operators.
- If the classification of the plant or distribution system changes to a higher level, then the grandparented certification will no longer be valid.
- If a grandparented operator chooses to work for a different water system, he or she will be asked to meet the initial certification requirements for that system and will lose their grandparent status.

3. Program Implementation

- The provider must have the ability to revoke or suspend operator certifications, or take other appropriate action if EPA or the provider discover operator misconduct. Examples of operator misconduct include: fraud, falsification of application, falsification of operating records, gross negligence in operation, incompetence, and/or failure to use reasonable care or judgement in the performance of duties. There will be a process for review of suspensions and revocations.
- The EPA Regions are encouraged to develop basic work plans to implement the tribal operator certification program. These work plans should address tracking systems, grant conditions, and funding for training/certification.
- EPA HQ will organize a peer review among the Regions to promote national consistency among regional implementation of the operator certification program.

EPA Regions will track what drinking water systems have a certified operator through the Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS), the EPA national drinking water database. EPA Regions will work with certification providers to verify what systems have certified operators.

4. Certification Renewal

A certification program should include the following requirements:

- The program should establish training requirements for renewal based on the level of certification held by the operator.

- The program must require all operators including grandparented operators to acquire necessary amounts and types of approved training. The provider may determine other requirements as deemed necessary.
- EPA asks that the program have a fixed cycle of renewal not to exceed three years.
- The program should require an individual to recertify, if the individual fails to renew or qualify for renewal within two years of the date that the certificate expires.

5. Resources Needed to Implement the Program

- An approved provider program should have sufficient resources to adequately sustain their operator certification program (components include, but are not limited to: staff, data management, testing, administration, and training approval).

6. Recertification

- EPA asks approved certification providers to have a process for recertification of individuals whose certification has expired for a period exceeding two years. EPA suggests this process include: review of the individual's experience and training, and reexamination. A review process should be developed for individuals whose certificates have been revoked or suspended.

7. Stakeholder Involvement and Program Review

- Stakeholder involvement is important to the public health objectives of the program. It helps to ensure the relevancy and validity of the program, and the confidence of all interested parties.
- EPA will include ongoing stakeholder involvement in the revisions, review, and subsequent operations of this voluntary tribal operator certification program. Examples of stakeholders may include: operators, environmental/public health groups, the general public, tribal representatives, consumer groups, technical assistance providers, utility managers, trainers, etc.

EPA will perform periodic reviews of operator certification programs. Examples of items to review include: exam items for relevancy and validity, budget and staffing, training relevancy, training needs through examination performance, and data management system.

IV. Submittal Process for Certification Providers

1. Submittal Schedule

Interested certification/training providers may send their program to U.S. EPA Headquarters, Attn: Staci Gatica, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (4606), Ariel Rios Bldg., 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20460. EPA will then coordinate a program review with the appropriate Regions. Within nine months of receiving the program, a decision will be made on program approval or disapproval.

2. Submittal Contents

The Provider should submit an explanation of all key elements outlined in the baseline standards.

V. Definitions

Administrator: Means the Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Available: Based on system size, complexity, and source water quality, a certified operator must be on site or able to be contacted as needed to initiate the appropriate action in a timely manner.

Community Water System (CWS): A public water system providing water to at least 15 service connections used by year-round residents or regularly serves at least 25 year- round residents.

Distribution System: Any combination of pipes, tanks, pumps, etc. which delivers water from the source(s) and/or treatment facility(ies) to the consumer.

Distribution System Complexity: Examples include: pressure zones, booster stations, storage tanks, fire protection, chlorination, non-residential consumers, cross connection potential, and/or demand variations.

Distribution System Size: Examples include: population served, number of service connections, size of pipes, total distance of pipe, and quantity of water distributed..

Distribution System: Any combination of pipes, tanks, pumps, etc. which delivers water from the source(s) and/or treatment facility(ies) to the consumer.

Grandparenting: The exemption for the existing operator(s) in responsible charge from meeting the initial education and/or examination requirements for the class of certification the system has been assigned.

Nontransient Noncommunity (NTNC) Water System: Is a public water system that is not a community water system and that regularly serves at least 25 of the same persons over six months per year. Common types of NTNC water systems are those serving schools, day care centers, factories, restaurants, nursing homes, casinos, and hospitals.

Operating Shift: That period of time during which operator decisions that affect public health are necessary for proper operation of the system.

Responsible Charge: The Operator(s) in Responsible Charge is defined as the person(s) designated by the owner to be the certified operator(s) who makes decisions regarding the daily operational activities of a public water system, water treatment facility, and/or distribution system, that will directly impact the quality and/or quantity of drinking water.

Source Water: Examples include: type (surface water, groundwater, groundwater under the influence of surface water, purchased water), quality (variability), and/or protection (e.g., wellhead protection).

Treatment Facility: Any place(s) where a community water system or nontransient noncommunity water system alters the physical or chemical characteristics of the drinking water. Chlorination may be considered as a function of a distribution system.

Treatment Facility Complexity: Examples include: difficulty in controlling water quality, potential effect to the consumer and/or safety of the operator.

Treatment Facility Size (capacity): Examples include: population served, number of service connections, and/or plant flow.

Validated Exam: An exam that is independently reviewed by subject matter experts to ensure exam is based on a job analysis and related to the classification of the system or facility.

Tribal Water System: EPA or tribally-regulated water systems on Indian lands.

Operator Certification Program Provider: An EPA-approved entity that provides certification for operators of tribal water systems.

VI. Acronyms

ABC– Associated Board of Certification

CWS– Community Water System

DWIG TSA– Drinking Water Infrastructure Grant Tribal Set-Aside

DWSRF– Drinking Water State Revolving Fund

EPA– Environmental Protection Agency

GED– General Equivalency Diploma

NAWA– Native American Water Association
NTEC– National Tribal Environmental Program
NTNCWS or NTNC – Nontransient Noncommunity water system
OW– Office of Water
SDWA– Safe Drinking Water Act
SDWIS– Safe Drinking Water Information System