

Operator Certification Working Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"The Partnership" June 5-6 Meeting

1. Background

The second meeting of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC) Operator Certification Working Group (the Partnership) was held on June 5-6, 1997 in Washington, D.C. Nineteen of the 22 members were present at the meeting.

2. Meeting Summary

EPA presented to the Partnership flow charts showing the relationship between the State/EPA Operator Certification Work Group and the Partnership. The presentation focused on how the two groups will work together in preparing recommendations on the information package as well as the operator certification guidelines. After questions and comments, the presentation was received without objections.

The Partnership reviewed the proposed components of the Section 1420 information package for States. The Partnership reached consensus that the following five components should be included in large loose-leaf binders as the information for States: (1) a cover letter, (2) the "Summary of Existing Operator Certification Programs," (3) the Association of Boards of Certification document, "Operator Certification Program Standards," (4) the Executive Summary and Chapter 6 of the National Academy of Sciences report, and (5) a list of State Drinking Water Administrators and Operator Certification Program Directors. The Partnership clearly indicated that the binder and its content be marked not regulations and not guidelines.

The next item discussed was the "Summary of Existing Operator Certification Programs". Before finalizing this document, the Partnership concurred that States should be given another opportunity to review the document to provide corrections and/or clarifications. Also, the Partnership agreed that the document should show the total number of community water systems and non-transient non-community water systems in each State in order to determine the potential impact of the forthcoming guidelines specifying minimum standards.

A third discussion item on the agenda was the cover letter for the information package. The Partnership contributed numerous comments and suggestions for the content of the letter. The Designated Federal Officer is to draft a cover letter based on the group's input, and fax it to all members of the Partnership for review and comment. Upon Partnership review and comments a final draft will be prepared and presented to the Partnership for final acceptance.

The Partnership confirmed that the eight recommended key standards proposed during the last meeting of the Partnership be accepted as the minimum standards to be recommended to NDWAC. The Partnership reached consensus on the four proposed standards that were unresolved by deciding that reciprocity should not be required, coverage and training should be included in the other standards as appropriate, and program review should be a standard. The Partnership recommended that the State/EPA workgroup develop a position paper for the program review standard.

Three draft position papers were completed by the State/EPA workgroup and presented to the Partnership for review and comment. The position papers were for the following recommended standards Authorization, Classification of Systems, Facilities and Operators, and Operator Qualifications. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to the Partnership's review and comment on these three position papers. In summary, the Partnership made several suggested changes to the position papers and had spirited discussion on the issues of coverage and grandparenting. A detailed account of the Partnership's comments will be provided to the State/EPA workgroup for their consideration in revising the papers.

3. Next Steps

The Partnership has scheduled a meeting for August 28-29 in Washington, D.C. to review and comment on additional position papers. The Partnership will also forward their recommendations on the information package to the NDWAC.