

Title 17. Professions, Occupations, and Businesses

Chapter XI. Department of Health, State Board of Health, Generally

Subchapter A. Generally

Part 51. Rules Pertaining to Water Operator Licensing

Codification Notes. This part as promulgated prior to codification into the Code of Arkansas Rules as follows:

"SECTION I. AUTHORITY

The following Rules Pertaining to Water Operator Licensing are duly adopted and promulgated by the Arkansas State Board of Health pursuant to the authority expressly conferred by the Laws of the State of Arkansas including, without limitation, Act 96 of 1913, as amended, Act 333 of 1957 as amended Act 1001 of 1991 as amended and Act 494 of 1997 as amended. (See Arkansas Codes Annotated, Title 17, Chapter 51, Sections 101 - 106, and Sections 201 - 205)"

"This Revision Effective March 25, 2024"

"SECTION XIX. SEVERABILITY

If any provision of these Rules, or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of these Rules which can be given effect without the invalid provisions or applications, and to this end the provisions hereto are declared to be severable."

"CERTIFICATION

This will certify that the foregoing Rules Pertaining to Water Operator Licensing were adopted by the Arkansas Board of Health at a regular session of said Board held in Little Rock, Arkansas, on the 26th day of October, 2023.

Jennifer Dillaha, MD
Director and State Health Officer
Secretary of the Arkansas Board of Health"

Subpart 1. Generally

17 CAR § 51-101. Purpose.

This part is adopted for the purpose of ensuring that all public water systems in the State of Arkansas are operated by personnel who have shown their competence and knowledge of the public health and scientific principles necessary to produce and deliver adequate quantities of water that meets or exceeds the national primary and secondary drinking water standards.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

17 CAR § 51-102. Definitions.

As used in this part:

(1)(A) "Advanced treatment" means the application of physical processes to water for the purposes of improving the quality or condition of the water.

(B) Some examples are aerators, clarifiers, or filters;

(2) "Board" means the State Board of Health;

(3) "Committee" means the Drinking Water Advisory and Operator Licensing Committee;

(4) "Department" means the Department of Health;

(5) "Late renewal" means an application for renewal when the application for

renewal or the associated fee is received more than thirty (30) days following the beginning of a renewal period;

(6) "Operate" means to make decisions or conduct acts that contribute to the production, treatment, or delivery of potable water by the water system, if such decisions or acts involve process control or system integrity;

(7) "Operating shift" means that period of time during which operator decisions that affect public health are necessary for proper operation of the water system;

(8) "Owner" means any person, firm, corporation, institution, or governmental agency, or their agent, owning, operating, or modifying any public water:

(A) System;

(B) Distribution facility; or

(C) Water treatment facility;

(9)(A) "Public water system" or "PWS" means all sources and their surroundings from which water is derived for drinking or domestic purposes by the public, and all structures, conduits, and appurtenances in connection therewith by which water for such use is obtained, treated, conditioned, stored, or delivered to the public, if such system:

(i) Has at least fifteen (15) service connections; or

(ii) Serves an average of twenty-five (25) individuals daily at least sixty (60) days per year.

(B) "Community public water system" means any public water system, which serves at least fifteen (15) service connections used by year-round residents or regularly serves at least twenty-five (25) year-round residents.

(C) "Consecutive systems" means public water systems that obtain all or part of their water supply, either directly or indirectly, from another public water system.

(D)(i) "Noncommunity public water system" means a public water system that serves at least fifteen (15) service connections or twenty-five (25) persons per day that is not a community water system.

(ii) "Nontransient noncommunity public water system" means a noncommunity water system that serves at least twenty-five (25) of the same individuals at least one hundred eighty (180) days (or portions thereof) per year.

(iii) "Transient noncommunity public water system" means any noncommunity public water system that is not a nontransient noncommunity public water system.

(E) "Small water system" means a public water system serving a total population of fewer than five hundred (500), including the population of any consecutive public water systems that it operates;

(10) "Surface water" means water that flows over or rests upon the surface of the earth;

(11) "Surface water influenced source" means any source:

(A) With significant occurrence of insects or other macro-organisms, algae, or large diameter pathogens such as *Giardia lamblia*; or

(B) Which is subject to significant changes in water quality which are determined to be in direct relationship with the climatological or surface water conditions;

(12) "Treatment" means the application of physical processes and/or the addition of chemicals to water which a public water system provides to the public, for the purposes of improving the quality of the water, except that the addition of gaseous chlorine, calcium hypochlorite, or sodium hypochlorite alone shall not be defined as treatment;

(13)(A)(i) "Water distribution facilities" means that portion of the public water system in which water is stored and conveyed from the water treatment facilities or other supply point to the premises of a water consumer.

(ii) This type of facility would also include groundwater sources without treatment.

(B) A single pressure plane distribution facility is a distribution network that has only one (1) pressure gradient downstream of the source of supply.

(C)(i) A multiple pressure plane distribution facility is a distribution

network that has more than a single pressure gradient downstream of the source of supply.

(ii) A booster pump station or a pressure reducing valve could create the additional pressure gradient.

(iii) A booster pump or a pressure reducing valve serving an individual or small group of service connections would not be considered as a separate pressure gradient;

(14)(A) "Water operator" means any person who during the performance of their regular duties, at all community public water systems, all nontransient noncommunity public water systems, or any other noncommunity public water system that utilizes a surface water source or surface water influenced source, exercises individual judgment, whether directly or indirectly, that might affect the safety, quality, or quantity of water delivered from the water system;

(B) The term "operator" generally includes, but is not limited to, managers, assistant managers, superintendents, assistant superintendents, construction and maintenance foremen, treatment plant personnel, and other persons responsible for the operation and maintenance of:

- (i) Wells;
- (ii) Reservoirs;
- (iii) Water treatment facilities;
- (iv) Water distribution facilities; and
- (v) Pumping facilities;

(15) "Water operator or operators in responsible charge" means the water operator or operators designated by the owner to be the licensed operator or operators who are in direct supervision of the water system regarding the daily operational activities and protocols that an operator or operators follow when operating a public water:

- (A) System;
- (B) Treatment facility; and/or
- (C) Distribution facility;

(16) "Water operator-in-training" means any water operator who has successfully completed the formal license examination but has not met the experience requirement; and

(17) "Water treatment facilities" means that portion of the public water system in which water is obtained and treated.

Authority. Arkansas Code §§ 17-51-103, 17-51-106.

17 CAR § 51-103. Applicability.

(a) This part applies to public water systems and any individual who seeks certification or licensure to perform:

(1) The duties of a water operator; or

(2) Other activities for which certification or licensure as a water operator is available from the Department of Health.

(b) All public water systems and any individual performing the duties of a water operator must comply with this part.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

17 CAR § 51-104. License type and grade of license required.

(a) The owners of all community public water systems, all nontransient noncommunity public water systems, and those other noncommunity public water systems that utilize a surface water source or surface water influenced groundwater source must place the direct supervision of the water system under available water operator or operators in responsible charge holding a valid license equal to or greater than the classification of the treatment facility and/or distribution facility.

(b) All community public water systems, all nontransient noncommunity public water systems, and those other noncommunity public water systems that utilize a surface water source or surface water influenced groundwater source must have a licensed operator available for each operating shift.

(c)(1) Water operators who perform water treatment facility duties must hold a valid active water treatment operator license.

(2) Water operators who perform duties in a water distribution facility must hold a valid active water distribution operator license.

(3) Water operators who perform both water treatment facility and water distribution facility duties must hold a valid active:

(A) Water Treatment Operator License; and

(B) Water Distribution Operator License.

(d) Water treatment facilities shall be classified as Grade I, Grade II, Grade III, and Grade IV facilities according to the facilities' size and complexity of treatment, with Grade IV being the largest, most complex.

(e) Water distribution facilities shall be classified as very small water system, Grade I, Grade II, Grade III, and Grade IV facilities according to the facilities' size and complexity of treatment, with Grade IV being the largest, most complex.

(f)(1) Water treatment facilities and distribution facilities shall be classified in accordance with Table 1.

(2)(A) Water operators, operators in responsible charge, or operators-in-training of these facilities shall be licensed in the appropriate grades and license types in accordance with Table 1.

(B) See Table 1 and attachment 1.

(g) Community and nontransient noncommunity public water systems and any other noncommunity public water system that utilizes a surface water source or surface water influenced source shall be classified based on the highest level of certification required to operate any of the system's:

(1) Treatment facilities; and

(2) Distribution facilities.

(h) During routine sanitary surveys of public water systems, Department of Health staff shall:

(1) Examine the organizational structure of each system;

(2) Identify all positions or classes of positions for which licensure is required;
and

(3) Determine if they are a supervisory position for licensing purposes.

(i) The licensure determinations may be appealed by the public water systems to the Drinking Water Advisory and Operator Licensing Committee for their review and determination.

(j) Licensed operators must notify the department in writing of any changes in their employment, contract operation, or volunteer status with a public water system.

Public Water System and Operator Required Licenses

WATER TREATMENT OPERATOR LICENSE

TYPE OF TREATMENT	POPULATION SERVED (Include consecutive system population.)	IS ORC* OR A SUPERIOR?	LICENSE GRADE REQUIRED
CHEMICAL ADDITION	25 TO 3,299	//////////	I
	3,300 TO 9,999	YES	II
		NO	I
	10,000 TO 49,999	YES	III
		NO	II
	50,000 OR GREATER	YES	IV
		NO	III
ADVANCED TREATMENT	25 TO 3,299	//////////	II
	3,300 TO 9,999	YES	III
		NO	II
	10,000 OR GREATER	YES	IV
		NO	III

WATER DISTRIBUTION OPERATOR LICENSE

DISTRIBUTION FACILITY COMPLEXITY	POPULATION SERVED (Include consecutive system population, if operated by this water system.)	IS ORC* OR A SUPERIOR?	LICENSE GRADE REQUIRED
SINGLE PRESSURE PLANE – NO PUMP(S) EXCEPT SOURCE/WTP PUMP(S)	25 TO 499	//////////	SMALL SYSTEM
	500 TO 3,299	//////////	I
	3,300 TO 9,999	YES	II
		NO	I
	10,000 TO 49,999	YES	III
		NO	II
	50,000 OR GREATER	YES	IV
		NO	III
MULTIPLE PRESSURE PLANES	25 TO 499	//////////	I
	500 TO 3,299	//////////	II
	3,300 TO 9,999	YES	III
		NO	II
	10,000 OR GREATER	YES	IV
		NO	III

*Operator in Responsible Charge

(Table 1)

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

17 CAR § 51-105. Criminal offenses.

(a) Prohibiting criminal offenses.

(1) An individual is not eligible to receive or hold a license issued by the State Board of Health if that individual has pleaded guilty or nolo contendere to or been found guilty of any of the offenses detailed in Arkansas Code § 17-3-102 et seq., by any court in the State of Arkansas or of any similar offense by a court in another state or of any similar offense by a federal court, unless the conviction was:

(A) Lawfully sealed under the Comprehensive Criminal Record Sealing Act of 2013, Arkansas Code § 16-90-1401 et seq.; or

(B) Otherwise sealed, pardoned, or expunged under prior law.

(2) The board may grant a waiver as authorized by Arkansas Code § 17-3-102 in certain circumstances.

(3)(A) The board is not authorized to conduct criminal background checks, but may inquire about criminal convictions upon application or renewal of a license.

(B) Any applicant or licensee who provides false information to the board regarding a criminal conviction may be subject to suspension, revocation, or denial of a license.

(b) Prelicensure prohibiting offense determination.

(1) Pursuant to Acts 2019, No. 990, an individual may petition for a prelicensure determination of whether:

(A) The individual's criminal record will disqualify the individual from licensure; and

(B) A waiver may be obtained.

(2) The individual must obtain the prelicensure criminal background check petition form from the board.

(3) The board will respond with a decision in writing to a completed petition within a reasonable time.

(4) The board's response will state the reason or reasons for the decision.

(5) All decisions of the board in response to the petition will be determined by the information provided by the individual.

(6) Any decision made by the board in response to a prelicensure criminal background check petition is not subject to appeal.

(7) The board will retain a copy of the petition and response and it will be reviewed during the formal application process.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

17 CAR § 51-106. Education requirements.

(a)(1) Applicants for licensing shall have a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma or GED.

(2) On a case-by-case basis, the Drinking Water Advisory and Operator Licensing Committee may determine that an applicant's experience or relevant training can be substituted for the requisite high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma.

(3) Any training or experience used for such substitution shall not be used to meet the minimum experience requirement.

(b) The mandatory minimum training requirements that must be met for each license grade and license type are contained in Table 2.

(c)(1) Applicants for licensure must meet the minimum mandatory training requirements prior to sitting for the license exam.

(2) It is the responsibility of the applicant to meet the mandatory training prior to sitting for an exam.

(3) Failure to meet the training requirements for the license exam grade and type taken will result in the invalidation of the license exam and forfeiture of the exam fee.

(d) The committee, after determining that a required training course is not, and has not been, reasonably available in a geographical area of the state, may waive the mandatory training requirement for that course and area, for a specified period of time.

(e)(1) All operators sitting for an exam after January 1, 2003, must meet the required training.

(2) Equivalent training attended prior to this date may be substituted for the required training requirements.

(f) Operators upgrading a license in good standing will be considered to have the training required for the license held.

(g) Education substitution for post-secondary degrees will be as follows:

(1) Bachelor or Associate of Science or Applied Science Degree in an applicable physical science may be substituted for all the minimum training requirements except the:

(A) Rules Course; and

(B) Course required for the specific license examination to be taken;

(2) A Bachelor or Associate of Applied Science in Water and Wastewater Technology may be substituted for the entire minimum training requirements except the Rules Course; and

(3) Post-secondary degrees used to meet education requirements cannot also be used to meet the experience requirement.

TRAINING HOUR REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSE EXAMS										
Course Name	Length	D-SS	D-1	D-2	D-3	D-4	T-1	T-2	T-3	T-4
PWS Rules and SDWA Compliance	8 hr	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Basic Water Works Math	8 hr.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Applied Water Works Math	8 hr.			X	X	X		X	X	X
Distribution Basic	24 hr.	X	X	X	X	X				
Distribution Intermediate	24 hr.			X	X	X				
Distribution Advanced	24 hr.					X				
Treatment Basic	24 hr.						X	X	X	X
Treatment Intermediate	24 hr.							X	X	X
Treatment Advanced	24 hr.								X	X
	Tot. hrs.	40	40	72	72	96	40	72	96	96

Table 2

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

Codification Notes. "GED" means general educational development test.

17 CAR § 51-107. Earn and learn.

(a) Pursuant to Acts 2021, No. 811, an applicant shall receive a water operator license if they meet the criteria set forth below.

(b)(1) As used in this section, "apprenticeship" means a program that meets the federal guidelines set out in 29 C.F.R. pt. 29, as existing on March 1, 2021, and approved by the United States Office of Apprenticeship as meeting the requirements of an apprenticeship.

(2)(A) An applicant for licensure under this section shall provide satisfactory proof of completion of apprenticeship via official documentation from the apprenticeship program.

(B) This documentation may be in the form of a:

- (i) Certificate;
- (ii) Diploma;
- (iii) Similar official credential; or
- (iv) Letter on official program letterhead.

(3) An applicant for licensure under this section shall provide satisfactory documentation that the:

(A) Completed apprenticeship program meets the federal guidelines set out in 29 C.F.R. pt. 29, as existing on March 1, 2021; and

(B) Program has been approved by the:

- (i) United States Office of Apprenticeship; or
- (ii) Division of Workforce Services.

(4) An applicant for licensure under this part shall meet all the other noneducational requirements for licensure under this part, including 17 CAR §§ 51-104, 51-105, 51-108, 51-109, 51-111, and 51-114.

(5) If an applicant is denied a license for failing to meet the criteria in subdivisions (b)(2) – (4) of this section, the applicant shall be provided the reason for denial in writing.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

17 CAR § 51-108. Examination requirements.

(a)(1) Applicants for licensing shall be examined to determine their skills, knowledge, ability, and judgment in the safe and proper operation of a public water system.

(2) The examination must:

(A) Consist of validated questions; and

(B) Be developed utilizing proper exam development procedures and validation protocols.

(b)(1) An individual desiring to obtain a water operator license by examination shall file a license application, including the required license and exam fees, with the certification program not later than sixty (60) days preceding the date of examination.

(2) The application will be valid for one (1) year.

(c)(1) An individual desiring to be examined shall be required to provide adequate photographic identification prior to receiving and when returning an examination.

(2) All exams and related materials must be returned prior to leaving the exam session.

(3) Failure to return the exam and related materials will result in:

(A) Administrative actions;

(B) Penalties; or

(C) Criminal charges.

(d)(1) Separate examinations shall be prepared for each certification classification.

(2) For Grades I – IV a separate examination shall be prepared for the water treatment plant operation license and the distribution facility operation license.

(e)(1) Grade I – IV examinations shall be written and consist of at least one hundred (100) questions.

(2) The very small system examination shall be written and consist of at least fifty (50) questions.

(3) All examinations will be closed book, with math formulas provided.

(f)(1) All examinations shall be scored by the Drinking Water Advisory and Operator Licensing Committee, or by others designated by the committee, and the applicant shall be notified of the outcome.

(2) The test booklet shall not be returned to the applicant.

(g)(1) Applicants who fail to pass the examination may repeat the examination at subsequent examination sessions.

(2)(A) An additional examination fee is required for each examination.

(B) This fee must be received fifteen (15) days prior to sitting for the exam.

(3) An additional application is not required for repeated examinations if the examination is repeated within one (1) year.

Authority. Arkansas Code §§ 17-51-103, 17-51-106.

17 CAR § 51-109. Experience requirements.

(a) Evaluation of the experience requirement shall be based on completion of the following periods of approved work:

Grade IV Treatment License Three (3) years

Grade IV Distribution License Three (3) years

Grade III Treatment License Two (2) years

Grade III Distribution License Two (2) years

Grade II Treatment License One (1) year
 Grade II Distribution License One (1) year

Grade I Treatment License Six (6) months
 Grade I Distribution License Six (6) months

Small System Distribution License No experience requirement

(b) In order for work to meet the experience requirement it must be from work or the supervision of work that is directly related to the license being obtained.

(c)(1) Certain post-secondary degrees may be substituted for experience credit towards meeting the experience requirement.

(2) The degree must be shown on the license application to be considered for credit.

(3) Experience credit will be allowed as shown in Table 3 at the end of this section.

(d) Post-secondary degree used to meet experience requirement cannot be used to meet education requirements.

POST SECONDARY DEGREE EXPERIENCE CREDIT			
Post Secondary Degree	License	Experience Allowed	License Appropriate Water System Experience Required
Bachelor of Science degrees in Engineering, Chemistry, Biology, or other applicable physical sciences	Grade I	6 Months	Not Applicable
	Grade II	9 Months	3 Months
	Grade III	18 Months	6 Months
	Grade IV	24 Months	12 Months
Associate of Applied Science Degrees in Water and Wastewater Technology	Grade I	6 Months	Not Applicable
	Grade II	9 Months	3 Months
	Grade III	18 Months	6 Months
	Grade IV	24 Months	12 Months

Associate of Applied Science Degrees in Engineering, Electronics, Environmental Science, or other applicable physical sciences	Grade I	6 Months	Not Applicable
	Grade II	6 Months	3 Months
	Grade III	9 Months	6 Months
	Grade IV	12 Months	12 Months

Table 3

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

17 CAR § 51-110. Issuance of licenses and permits.

(a) A license shall not be issued to any applicant until the:

(1) Education, examination, and experience requirements have been successfully completed; or

(2) Applicant has been successfully evaluated for reciprocity.

(b) An operator-in-training certificate shall be issued to a license applicant when the:

(1) Experience requirement has not been completed; and

(2) License examination has been successfully completed.

(c)(1) Temporary permits will not be issued.

(2) To issue a temporary permit to an unlicensed operator of a public water system, the Department of Health must assure that its issuance will not jeopardize public health and safety.

(3) The department cannot provide this assurance due to improved knowledge of water borne disease outbreaks and because public water systems have an increased risk of microbial contamination.

(d)(1) Inactive licenses are no longer allowed.

(2) Licenses placed in the inactive status, when it was allowed, may be reinstated at any time, after approval by the department, by paying the required reinstatement fees and passing an examination on current Public Water System Rules in

20 CAR pt. 140, policies, and Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C. § 300f et seq., compliance requirements.

(3) The department shall require license examination be passed to reinstate the license if the inactive period exceeds ten (10) years.

(4) Examinations may be waived provided the operator can prove through closely related work that the operator has kept current with present public water system requirements.

POST SECONDARY DEGREE EXPERIENCE CREDIT			
Post Secondary Degree	License	Experience Allowed	License Appropriate Water System Experience Required
Bachelor of Science degrees in Engineering, Chemistry, Biology, or other applicable physical sciences	Grade I	6 Months	Not Applicable
	Grade II	9 Months	3 Months
	Grade III	18 Months	6 Months
	Grade IV	24 Months	12 Months
Associate of Applied Science Degrees in Water and Wastewater Technology	Grade I	6 Months	Not Applicable
	Grade II	9 Months	3 Months
	Grade III	18 Months	6 Months
	Grade IV	24 Months	12 Months
Associate of Applied Science Degrees in Engineering, Electronics, Environmental Science, or other applicable physical sciences	Grade I	6 Months	Not Applicable
	Grade II	6 Months	3 Months
	Grade III	9 Months	6 Months
	Grade IV	12 Months	12 Months

Table 3

Authority. Arkansas Code §§ 17-51-103, 17-51-106.

17 CAR § 51-111. Fees established.

(a) **Examination.** The fee shall be twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) per examination, the initial exam fee shall be paid at the time of license application and all subsequent exam fees must be received fifteen (15) days in advance of the examination.

(b) **License.** The fee shall be ten dollars (\$10.00), paid at the time of license application.

(c) **License renewal.** The fee shall be ten dollars (\$10.00) for each two-year renewal period for each license or operator-in-training certificate renewed.

(d) **Penalty for late renewal.** The fee for penalty for late renewal shall be five dollars (\$5.00).

(e) **Reciprocity evaluation.** The fee for evaluating an applicant for reciprocity shall be twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) per license evaluated.

(f) **Reinstatement of inactive license.** The fee for reinstating an inactive license shall be ten dollars (\$10.00) for each renewal period during which the license has not been active, provided that the total fee shall not exceed thirty-five dollars (\$35.00).

(g) **Reinstatement of revoked license.** The fee due to revocation shall be:

- (1) Ten dollars (\$10.00) for each two-year renewal period; and
- (2) Ten dollars (\$10.00) for a reissuance of license.

(h) **Initial licensure fee waiver.**

(1)(A) Pursuant to Acts 2021, No. 725, an applicant may receive a waiver of the initial licensure fee, if eligible.

(B) Eligible applicants are applicants who:

(i) Are receiving assistance through the:

(a) Arkansas, or current state of residence equivalent, Medicaid Program;

(b) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);

(c) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC);

(d) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TEA); or

(e) Lifeline Assistance Program (LAP);

(ii) Were approved for unemployment within the last twelve (12) months; or

(iii) Have an income that does not exceed two hundred percent (200%) of the federal poverty income guidelines.

(2)(A) Applicants shall provide documentation showing their receipt of benefits from the appropriate state agency.

(B) For Medicaid, SNAP, WIC, TEA, or LAP, documentation from the Department of Human Services or current state of residence equivalent agency.

(C) For unemployment benefits approval in the last twelve (12) months, the Department of Workforce Services, or current state of residence equivalent agency.

(D) For proof of income, copies of all Internal Revenue Service forms indicating applicant's total personal income for the most recent tax year, e.g., W-2, 1099, etc.

(3) Applicants shall attest that the documentation provided under subdivision (h)(2) of this section is a true and correct copy and fraudulent or fraudulently obtained documentation shall be grounds for denial or revocation of license.

Authority. Arkansas Code §§ 17-51-103, 17-51-106.

17 CAR § 51-112. Examination sessions.

(a) **Arkansas Water Works and Water Environmental Association district meeting.** The Department of Health shall assign personnel to conduct examinations for applicants for licenses in each Arkansas Water Works and Water Environmental Association district, upon request, during the months of July and November, at a predetermined and publicized location and time.

(b) **Annual industry association conferences.** The department shall assign personnel to conduct examinations for applicants for licenses in conjunction with the annual conferences of all major industry associations, upon request, with time and place to be publicized.

(c) **Other scheduled examination sessions.** The department shall assign personnel to conduct examinations for applicants for licenses at other examination sessions set by the Drinking Water Advisory and Operator Licensing Committee, at a predetermined and publicized location.

(d) **Special examinations.**

(1) Any applicant for a license may request a special examination to be given at a date other than the normally scheduled exam session.

(2) This request:

- (A) Must be in writing to the executive secretary of the committee; and
- (B) Should detail the reasons the special examination is needed.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

17 CAR § 51-113. Licenses.

(a) **Issued.**

(1) On satisfactory fulfillment of the certification requirements the executive secretary of the Drinking Water Advisory and Operator Licensing Committee shall issue a suitable license to the applicant designating their competency.

(2) The license shall state the:

- (A) Licensed individual's name;
- (B) License grade; and
- (C) License number.

(b) **Permanent.** The license shall be permanent unless:

- (1) Revoked for cause;
- (2) Replaced by a higher grade license;
- (3) Invalidated due to 17 CAR § 51-114(a); or
- (4) Invalidated due to obtaining or renewing the license through:
 - (A) Fraud;
 - (B) Deceit; or
 - (C) The submission of inaccurate qualifications or renewal data.

(c) Endorsement.

(1) **Required qualifications.** An applicant applying for reciprocal licensure shall meet the following requirements:

(A)(i) The applicant shall hold a substantially similar license in another United States jurisdiction.

(ii) A license from another state is substantially similar to an Arkansas water operator license if the other state's licensure qualifications require:

(a) A high school diploma or GED;

(b) Drinking water training similar to Table 2;

(c) Passing of proficiency test meeting, 17 CAR § 51-108(a); and

(d) Training instruction for license maintenance similar to 17 CAR § 51-114(a).

(iii) The applicant shall hold his or her occupational licensure in good standing.

(iv) The applicant shall not have had a license revoked for:

(a) An act of bad faith; or

(b) A violation of law, rule, or ethics.

(v) The applicant shall not hold a suspended or probationary license in a United States jurisdiction;

(B) The applicant shall be sufficiently competent in drinking water treatment for treatment license or water distribution for distribution license; and

(C)(i) The applicant should have knowledge and necessary skills to operate and maintain:

(a) Water treatment plants for treatment license; and

(b) Water distribution for distribution license.

(ii) These skills will include:

(a) Basic algebra, chemistry, and biology knowledge; and

(b) Mechanical and laboratory aptitude.

(2)(A) Required documentation an applicant shall submit are:

(i) A fully executed application;

- (ii) The required fee; and
- (iii) The documentation described below.

(B) As evidence that the applicant's license from another jurisdiction is substantially similar to Arkansas's, the applicant shall submit the following information:

(i)(a) Evidence of current and active licensure in that state.

(b) The committee may verify this information:

(1) Online if the jurisdiction at issue provides primary source verification on its website; or

(2) By telephone to the other state's licensing board; and

(ii)(a) Evidence that the other state's licensure requirements match those listed in subdivision (c)(1)(A) of this section.

(b) The State Board of Health may verify this information online or by telephone to the other state's licensing board.

(C) To demonstrate that the applicant meets the requirements in subdivision (c)(1)(A) the applicant shall provide the board with:

(i) The names of all states in which the applicant is currently licensed or has been previously licensed; and

(ii)(a) Letters of good standing or other information from each state in which the applicant is currently or has ever been licensed showing that the applicant:

(1) Has not had his or her license revoked for the reasons listed in subdivision (c)(1)(A)(iv) of this section; and

(2) Does not hold a license on suspended or probationary status as described in subdivision (c)(1)(A)(v) of this section.

(b) The board may verify this information:

(1) Online if the jurisdiction at issue provides primary source verification on its website; or

(2) By telephone to the other state's licensing board.

(D) As evidence that the applicant is sufficiently competent in the field of drinking water treatment for treatment license or water distribution for distribution

license, an applicant shall pass an appropriate grade water treatment or water distribution license exam.

(E) The following documentation must be provided:

(i) Proof license is current;

(ii) List of all state licenses as called for in subdivision (c)(2)(C)(i) of this section; and

(iii) Letters and other documents called for in subdivision (c)(2)(C)(ii) of this section.

(3) Temporary and provisional license.

(A) The board shall issue a temporary and provisional license immediately upon receipt of the:

(i) Application;

(ii) Required fee; and

(iii) Documentation required under subdivisions (c)(2)(B) and (C) of this section.

(B) The temporary and provisional license shall be effective for at least ninety (90) days or until the board makes a decision on the application, unless the board determines that the applicant does not meet the requirements in subdivision (c)(1) of this section, in which case the provisional and temporary license shall be immediately revoked.

(C) An applicant may:

(i) Provide the rest of the documentation required above in order to receive a license; or

(ii) Only provide the information necessary for the issuance of a temporary and provisional license.

(d) Reciprocity from state not offering reciprocity to Arkansas water operators.

(1) The board shall require an applicant to:

(A) Take the mandatory license training as shown in Table 2; or

(B) Document substantially equivalent training to Table 2 requirements if the applicant is licensed in another state that does not offer reciprocity to Arkansas residents that is similar to reciprocity provided to out-of-state applicants in Arkansas Code § 17-1-108.

(2) Reciprocity in another state will be considered similar to reciprocity under Arkansas Code § 17-1-108 if the reciprocity provisions in the other state:

(A) Provide the least restrictive path to licensure for Arkansas applicants;

(B) Do not require Arkansas applicants to participate in the apprenticeship, education, or training required as a prerequisite to licensure of a new professional in that state, except that the state may require Arkansas applicants to participate in continuing education or training that is required for all professionals in that state to maintain the licensure; and

(C) Do not require Arkansas applicants to take a state-specific education unless required to do so under the same conditions described in Arkansas Code § 17-1-108.

(e) License for person from state that does not license water operators.

(1) **Required qualifications.** An applicant from a state that does not license drinking water treatment or distribution operators shall meet the following requirements:

(A) The applicant shall be sufficiently competent in drinking water treatment for treatment license or water distribution for distribution license; and

(B) The applicant must:

(i) Meet the mandatory license training as shown in Table 2;

(ii) Pass an appropriate grade water treatment or water distribution license exam; and

(iii) Fulfill the experience requirements listed in 17 CAR § 51-109.

(2) Required documentation an applicant shall submit are fully executed application, the required fee, and the documentation described below:

(A) As evidence that the applicant is sufficiently competent in the field of drinking water treatment for treatment license or water distribution for distribution

license, an applicant shall pass an appropriate grade water treatment or water distribution license exam; and

(B) The applicant must document:

(i) Attendance completion of the mandatory license training as shown in Table 2;

(ii) Passing the appropriate grade water treatment or water distribution license exam; and

(iii) Fulfillment of the experience requirements listed in 17 CAR § 51-109 for the license.

(f) **Automatic licensure.**

(1) **Definitions.** As used in this subsection:

(A) "Automatic licensure" means granting the occupational licensure without an individual having met occupational licensure requirements provided:

(i) Under the Arkansas Code; or

(ii) By other provisions in this part;

(B) "Automatic occupational licensure" means granting of occupational licensure to an individual who establishes residency in this state without the individual's having met occupational licensure requirements provided:

(i) Under Title 17 of the Arkansas Code; or

(ii) By the rules of the relevant occupational licensing entity;

(C) "Uniformed service member" means an:

(i) Active or reserve component member of the:

(a) United States Air Force;

(b) United States Army;

(c) United States Coast Guard;

(d) United States Marine Corps;

(e) United States Navy;

(f) United States Space Force; or

(g) National Guard;

(ii) Active component member of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps; or

(iii) Active or reserve component member of the United States Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service; and

(D) "Uniformed service veteran" means a former member of the United States uniformed services discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

(2) **Applicability.** This section applies to a:

(A) Uniformed service member stationed in the State of Arkansas;

(B) Uniformed service veteran who resides in or establishes residency in the State of Arkansas; or

(C) The spouse of subdivision (f)(2)(A) or (f)(2)(B) of this section including a uniformed service member who is:

(i) Assigned a tour of duty that excludes the spouse from accompanying the uniformed service member and the spouse relocates to Arkansas; or

(ii) Killed or succumbs to his or her injuries or illness in the line of duty if the spouse establishes residency in Arkansas.

(3) **Automatic licensure.**

(A) Automatic licensure shall be granted to persons listed in subdivision (f)(2) of this section if the person:

(i) Is a holder in good standing of occupational licensure with similar scope of practice issued by another state, territory, or district of the United States; and

(ii) Pays the applicable licensure fees in 17 CAR § 51-111.

(B) **Automatic Occupational Licensure for Out-of-State Licensure Act, Acts 2023, No. 457.**

(i) An applicant shall be eligible for automatic occupational licensure if:

(a) The applicant is either:

(1) In good standing for at least one (1) year for Water Operator License with similar scope of practice issued by another state, territory, or district of the United States; or

(2) Has worked for at least three (3) years in the water operator occupation in another state, territory, or district of the United States that does not use a Water Operator License;

(b) The applicant does not have a disqualifying criminal offense under Arkansas Code § 17-3-102 or under any additional state law relating to the Water Operator Licensure;

(c) The applicant does not have a complaint, allegation, or investigation pending in his or her occupational activity in this state or in the state of the applicant's previous residency where the Water Operator Licensure was granted; and

(d) The applicant passes an examination specific to relevant state laws that regulate the water operator occupation.

(ii) The Department of Health may waive the requirement for the applicant to pass an examination specific to relevant state laws that regulate water operator occupation if the department finds that:

(a) The combination of the applicant's education, training, and experience is a sufficient substitute for the state law examination requirements; and

(b) A waiver by the department will not harm public health, safety, or welfare.

(iii) Upon the applicant being granted automatic occupational licensure, the applicant shall:

(a) Meet all the Water Operator Licensure requirements;

(b) Meet all renewal requirements of the Water Operator Licensure, including, without limitation, a criminal background check and continuing education hours; and

(c) Pay the licensure fee in 20 CAR § 51-110(a).

(4) **Credit toward initial licensure.** Relevant and applicable uniformed service education, training, national certification, or service-issued credential shall be accepted toward initial licensure.

(5) **Expiration dates and continuing education.**

(A) A license expiration date shall be extended for a deployed uniformed service member or spouse for one hundred eighty (180) days following the date of the uniformed service member's return from deployment.

(B) A uniformed service member or spouse shall be exempt from continuing education requirements in subsection (a) of this section for one hundred eighty (180) days following the date of the uniformed service member's return from deployment.

(C) Any uniformed service member or spouse exercising the exemption shall provide evidence of completion of continuing education before renewal or grant of a subsequent license.

(g) Suspension.

(1) The department, with the knowledge and approval of the Secretary of the Department of Health shall suspend a water operator's license or operator-in-training certificate or deny issuance of a license or certificate for cause, including, but not limited to, when it is found the license holder, operator-in-training, or applicant:

(A) Has practiced fraud or deception;

(B) Has not used reasonable care or judgment, or the application of their knowledge or ability was not used in the performance of their duties that resulted in water quality being compromised or any noncompliance with any state or federal requirement; or

(C) Is incompetent, unable, or not willing to perform their duties properly.

(2) The suspension or denial shall remain in effect until the committee reviews the case.

(h) Revocation.

(1) The committee shall hold a public hearing into the suspension.

(2) The department will present its case and the water operator will have the opportunity to present his or her defense.

(3) The committee shall then uphold or deny the suspension.

(4) If the suspension is upheld, the committee shall:

(A) Report the findings of the public hearing to the board; and

(B) Recommend the license remain suspended for a recommended time period or be revoked.

(5) The board shall then reinstate, suspend, or revoke the license.

(i) **Reinstatement.**

(1) Any licensed water system operator or operator-in-training who for any reason, other than revocation, desires to have a license reinstated may request, in a hearing before the committee, that the committee reinstate the license, with or without conditions.

(2) If the license is reinstated, payment of the applicable fees under 117 CAR § 51-111(c) and (f) must be remitted.

Authority. Arkansas Code §§ 17-51-103, 17-51-106.

Codification Notes. "GED" means general educational development test.

17 CAR § 51-114. Maintenance of license.

(a)(1) In order to renew a water operator license or operator-in-training certificate, the operator must certify to the Drinking Water Advisory and Operator Licensing Committee the attendance, at a minimum, of twenty-four (24) hours per two-year renewal period of approved training instruction.

(2) No additional training instruction will be required to renew additional licenses each renewal period.

(3) At least twelve (12) of the approved hours must be in subjects directly applicable to the field of water supply, treatment, distribution, pumping, metering, or management, or the study of approved materials on the same subjects.

(4) The remaining twelve (12) hours of approved training may be indirectly applicable subject matter, such as:

- (A) Personal operator safety;
- (B) Wastewater;
- (C) Plumbing inspection; or

(D) Cross-connection control certification courses.

(5) The various water operator associations' annual and monthly district meetings will be considered as directly applicable training.

(6) This subsection is effective with the start of the July 1, 2003, to June 30, 2005, renewal period.

(b)(1) The water operator is responsible for submitting adequate documentation of the completion of the required training at the time of license renewal.

(2) This documentation must include the date, subject, sponsor, and number of approved training hours for each training session completed and submitted for training credit.

(c) A license that has not been renewed in accordance with this section, within ninety (90) days after the license has expired, shall be lapsed and invalid.

(d) Any licensee whose license has expired can request, within one (1) year of the date of expiration, the license be reinstated by the Department of Health upon documentation of past renewal training requirements and the payment of the fees as stated in 17 CAR § 51-111(c) and (d).

(e)(1) A water operator license or operator-in-training certificate that has been expired for more than one (1) year cannot be reinstated.

(2) It is necessary for such a license or certificate holder to reapply and be reexamined according to the requirements for new applicants.

Authority. Arkansas Code §§ 17-51-103, 17-51-106.

17 CAR § 51-115. Special purpose license.

(a)(1) A special purpose license is authorized for transient noncommunity public water systems that utilize groundwater sources that are surface water influenced sources.

(2) The license shall be restricted to these systems that utilize cartridge/bag filtration technology.

(3)(A) The license exam will be a modified small water system license with specific questions added related to the very specialized simple-to-operate water treatment equipment (cartridge filtration) and microbial inactivation processes being utilized by these systems to meet the Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C. § 300f et seq.

(B) The Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C. § 300f et seq., requires:

(i) These systems to be operated by qualified personnel; and

(ii) That this license will be used to demonstrate the operators of these systems meet that requirement.

(b)(1) The license exam shall have a minimum of fifty (50) questions related to the topics of:

(A) Cartridge/bag filtration technology;

(B) Microbial inactivation processes;

(C) Surface water treatment rules;

(D) Water distribution questions; and

(E) Groundwater sources.

(2) Holders of this license shall be required to meet the same maintenance of license requirements as a small system distribution license holder or attend a Department of Health renewal training course, each renewal period, designed specifically to address this type of system and the technology to which this license applies.

(c) Operators of these specific systems may also utilize the treatment and distribution licenses required of surface source transient noncommunity public water systems.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

17 CAR § 51-116. Drinking Water Advisory and Operator Licensing Committee.

(a)(1) The Drinking Water Advisory and Operator Licensing Committee shall elect a chair who shall serve for a term of one (1) year.

(2) The election shall occur at the first meeting of the state fiscal year.

(b) The committee shall utilize "Robert's Rules of Order" as a guide for procedures for conducting business.

(c) In the event that more than one (1) person is appointed to the committee at a particular State Board of Health meeting, the new appointees shall draw lots to determine which of the vacant terms that each shall fill.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

17 CAR § 51-117. Meetings.

The Drinking Water Advisory and Operator Licensing Committee shall meet at least once a year and in special meetings called by the chair or requested by the Department of Health.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

17 CAR § 51-118. Administrative penalty authority.

The Department of Health shall have the authority to assess administrative penalties against any individual or any public water system for failure to comply with any portion of this part, in accordance with the requirements of Arkansas Code § 20-7-101 et seq., and Arkansas Code § 14-262-101 et seq.

Authority. Arkansas Code § 17-51-103.

Appendix A. Required Grades for Treatment License and Distribution License

Link:

<https://CodeOfARRules.arkansas.gov/docs/CARCodeAppendices/Appendices/71/17CARpt.51Attachment.pdf>