

DATE: April 6, 2020

TO: Water and Wastewater System Owners and Operators

FROM: Cordella Friesen  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Environmental Stewardship  
Manitoba Conservation and Climate

SUBJECT: Support for Manitoba's Water and Wastewater Facility Operators in Response to COVID-19

Manitoba's water and wastewater facility operators are providing a critical service to Manitobans in the provision of water treatment and distribution and wastewater collection and treatment. The Government of Manitoba supports you in your efforts to ensure that your facilities continue to operate.

At this time we are asking all water and wastewater facilities to review their situation and make plans to ensure that facilities will be able to operate in the event of operator shortages due to illness:

- Identify backup operators;
- Review and update emergency response plans;
- Review and update standard operating procedures; and
- Consider making reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring facilities to share operators if needed and provide training before it is needed. Our website provides a draft template of a Memorandum of Understanding to be used to share operators between jurisdictions during an emergency.

In accordance with the Water and Wastewater Facility Operators Regulation, all operators at water and wastewater facilities must be certified. The following information is intended to assist owners of facilities identify persons who are available to operate in case of a temporary operator shortage due to COVID-19:

- The regulation permits an operator who is (a) a professional engineer, a Bachelor of Science graduate or a certified engineering technologist; and (b) who has taken relevant academic courses, to work at the facility for up to six months in a twelve-month period without certification.
- The department can accept and process applications from facility owners for conditional certification under Section 19 of the regulation due to these exceptional circumstances. These certifications will be issued to those who the employer believes are capable of operating the facility but who do not currently meet all of the certification criteria. Situations where a conditional certificate will be issued include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Operators who did not meet the renewal requirements for continuing education;
  - Operators who are experienced but are short of the required experience for full certification;
  - Operators who have not yet passed the certification examination;
  - Operators who are recently retired or have moved to other careers that did not require maintenance of their certification.

Owners who intend to apply for conditional certification or have questions about their specific situation should email [wwopcert@gov.mb.ca](mailto:wwopcert@gov.mb.ca) for expedited approval.

- The department can also accept and process operator certification applications without an original signature from the operator between April 1 and July 31. A statement on the application should identify that the operator has given verbal approval for the submission.
- The Manitoba Water and Wastewater Association has offered to match operators able to volunteer with facilities that are experiencing a shortage: [office@mwwa.net](mailto:office@mwwa.net).

The department is available to support you during this difficult time. If you have any questions regarding your team of operators please contact the certification program or your local Drinking Water Officer or Environment Officer. As the situation evolves, the department may roll out other changes to assist operators; please continue to check our website for the latest announcements: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/index.html>.

*Original Signed By*

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c. Shannon Kohler, Director, Environmental Approvals Branch  
Kim Philip, Director, Office of Drinking Water