

Operator Certification Bulletin



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Updates to the Training Requirements for Drinking Water Operators Guide

The Training Requirements for Drinking Water Operators guide was updated on May 8, 2024. This guide provides information on the annual training requirements for drinking water operators and water quality analysts (WQAs) and the certificate renewal process.

The guide was updated to help address common questions and feedback related to operator training requirements.

Changes to the guide included **clarification of training requirement rules** and an **expansion of the topics accepted for on-the-job practical training (OJT)**.

Clarifying Training Requirement Rules

Drinking water operators and water quality analysts **must complete their annual training requirements whether or not they intend to renew their certificate**. Some employers and operators mistakenly believe that annual training does not need to be completed if the person holds an Operator-in-Training (OIT) certificate, or if they will be upgrading their certificate before their certificate expires.

To address this misconception, a statement was added to the beginning of the guide clarifying the requirement that every operator, including OITs and WQAs employed in a drinking water subsystem, must complete their annual training requirements.

Annual training requirements must be completed even if you intend to upgrade your certificate before it expires.



Types of Activities Not Accepted as OJT (Class I-IV Operators and Water Quality Analysts)

On occasion, operators include activities as training in their renewal application that do not meet the MECP's policies regarding OJT.

To help ensure that these situations don't continue to arise, the guide clarifies that the following activities are **not accepted as OJT**:

- non-facilitated viewing of conference presentations or webinars recordings
- time spent attending tradeshow at conferences or other events

Structured learning events, held as part of tradeshow that meet the criteria for on-the-job practical training, may be used to meet the OJT requirement.



Topics Updated for Accepted On-the-Job Practical Training

The topics accepted for OJT section of the guide have been revised. Revisions included **reorganizing the topics areas for increased clarity** and adding both 'Professional Effectiveness' and 'Health and Safety' as separate topic areas. Additional training topics were added to the lists included for the topic areas, and **many more examples of specific course or training subjects have been included** to make selecting and coordinating operator training for easier.



Entry-Level Course Integration in College Programs



The Entry-Level Course for Drinking Water Operators (ELC) is a mandatory course for drinking water Operators-in-Training to become a Class 1 operator. Created based on recommendations from the Walkerton Inquiry, this course combines self-study and in-class instruction. Initially only delivered by the Walkerton Clean Water Centre, it has since expanded to colleges across the province to ensure widespread access to quality training.

To date, 16 Ontario colleges have entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks to deliver the ELC as part of their programs.

Each participating college fully incorporates the entry-level training curriculum into their diploma programs rather than offering it as a separate, stand-alone course. These offerings enable students to fulfil one of the certification requirements for drinking water operators in Ontario, while also working towards a college diploma.



The ELC has been integrated into the existing college curriculum of participating colleges for many years now. Many of the colleges offer co-op placements to help students gain hands-on operational experience.

Benefits of Integration

Once students complete their program and pass the Operator-In-Training (OIT) exam in either drinking water treatment or distribution/ distribution and supply, employers will benefit from a ready pool of entry-level operators.

- Graduates from an ELC integrated college program will be considered to have met the ELC requirements. Students completing the ELC before entering the workforce are set up for certification advancement and it is seen as an asset in their career as an operator.
- Integrating the ELC into college programs provides additional access and extends the reach of ELC to potential operators throughout the province.
- This integration increases recognition of the drinking water operator profession, ensuring a reliable pool of qualified operators.

List of Colleges Offering ELC



The Ministry has entered into an Agreement with the following **16 colleges**, listed below:

Algonquin College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician Program • Water and Wastewater Technician Program 	Lambton College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician – Water and Wastewater Systems Operations (EWSO) Program
Cambrian College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Monitoring & Impact Assessment Program 	Loyalist College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician Program • Environmental Technology Program
Canadore College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Projection and Compliance Technician Program 	Mohawk College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician Program
Centennial College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technology Program • Environmental Technician Program 	Niagara College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician Field and Laboratory (Co-op Program)
Confederation College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician Program 	Northern College, Kirkland Lake Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician – Water and Wastewater Systems Operations Program
Fleming College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician Program • Advanced Water Systems Operations and Management (Co-Op Program) 	Seneca Polytechnic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician Program • Environmental Technology Program
Georgian College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician Program • Environmental Technology Program 	University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician Program
Humber College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Engineering Technology Program 	St. Lawrence College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Technician Program

Want to know more about the college programs?

Owners and operating authorities of drinking water systems are encouraged to contact their local participating college to seek out student candidates at job fairs, inform colleges of the needs of the water industry, and to explore co-op opportunities.

Walkerton Clean Water Centre Provides Training for Postsecondary Students across Ontario

Since 2007, the **Walkerton Clean Water Centre (WCWC)** has offered practical hands-on training to support Ontario's postsecondary students enrolled in an environmental college program that delivers the Entry-Level Course for Drinking Water Operators. Training has been provided to over 1,500 students to date.


What is the OCTP?

Operation of Conventional Treatment Processes (OCTP) is a two-day course that gives participants the opportunity to operate, monitor, and troubleshoot a conventional drinking water treatment pilot plant.

It also provides hands-on experience in the laboratory where participants:

- Monitor basic water quality parameters, and
- Work with on-line, bench-top and handheld analyzers.

For the first time, in April 2024, WCWC delivered OCTP on-site at Confederation College in Thunder Bay. This partnership has extended WCWC's reach, making OCTP accessible to Confederation's Environmental Technician candidates.

 Participant feedback is always positive. Lindsay Taylor, a Niagara College and Environmental Technician candidate shared her experience with WCWC's OCTP course.

“*Through in-class and hands-on experience, students can expect to enhance their existing knowledge of the conventional processes for treating drinking water. The OCTP course was focused primarily on daily sampling and analysis processes that one might encounter as an entry-level drinking water operator.*

Lindsay Taylor, a Niagara College and Environmental Technician candidate

While I am still training to take my Operator-In-Training exam and complete Entry-Level Course for Drinking Water Operators, I look forward to using the technical skills I gained out of the OCTP course as a future drinking water operator and Environmental Technician/Scientist. ”

Lindsay Taylor, a Niagara College and Environmental Technician candidate



Operation of Conventional Treatment Processes course participants working on a pilot plant.

In addition to postsecondary students, WCWC continues to engage youth through water education with providing **facility tours** and **demonstrations** to showcase careers related to drinking water and the environment.

Contact

WCWC is committed to providing a variety of training for drinking water professionals across Ontario. For more information, please visit wcwc.ca, or contact them at 866-515-0550 or training@wcwc.ca.

Did you know...?

An Operator is Expected to Understand and Adhere to the Ontario Water Operator Code of Ethics

Continuous training in the workplace is important to help a person strengthen their existing skills, competency, and gain new knowledge. It also gives the person:

- a better understanding of their responsibilities as an operator,
- helps eliminate skills gaps, and
- provides knowledge of emerging issues and technologies.

Completing training on ethical behavior of an operator directly supports the ministry's expectation that certified operators act honestly, competently and with integrity, with a view to ensuring the protection and safety of the users of drinking water systems.

▶▶▶ The Ethics for Drinking Water Operators course is available to take online through Walkerton Clean Water Centre

Experience as a Back-up or On-call Operator

- **Back-up operators** provide operational coverage for other operators who are unavailable, due to sick leave, vacation, or other reasons.
- **On-call operators** provide operational coverage as required after regular working hours and on weekends.

Part-time Experience Credit

Operators who work **primarily** as back-up or on-call operators in a specific system are considered to be operating on a part-time basis as they do not operate on a regular basis.

- ▶▶▶
- Experience credit will only be granted for the time spent performing operating functions.
 - No credit is given for time spent "standing by".

Example

A full-time wastewater treatment operator who provides **on-call coverage** of the wastewater collection system would be credited **part-time wastewater collection experience** for the time they were called out to operate the system. Because they only work in the collection system for on-call coverage, they work primarily as **back-up operator** in that system type.

Full-time Experience Credit

Operators who provide back-up or on-call coverage **in addition** to operating a system on a full-time regular basis similar to other operators of the system are credited full-time experience.

The Mandatory Certificate Renewal Course is Available Online



The Mandatory Certificate Renewal Course has been delivered by the Walkerton Clean Water Centre (WCWC) since 2005. This training requirement is based on the recommendations of the Walkerton Inquiry, emphasizing the importance of ongoing training in maintaining water safety and quality.

The new **online offering** of the Mandatory Certificate Renewal Course has been added to the existing options, which include:

- Correspondence
- Live virtual delivery
- In-class
- On location (upon request)

Requirement

Ontario's drinking water operators and water quality analysts must complete the Mandatory Certificate Renewal Course **every three years**. Completion of this course is a condition for certificate renewal.

Course Content

Each renewal cycle introduces **a new course** covering relevant topics and emerging issues that reflect the current landscape of drinking water operations.



Find the course through the WCWC course registration page and [sign up online](#)

Industry Events

Connect with the community in Ontario and in person

Event	Host	Date	Location
<u>OOWA's 2025 Annual Convention & Expo</u>	OOWA	March 30-April 1, 2025	Ottawa Conference and Event Centre 200 Coventry Rd, Ottawa, ON K1K 4S3
<u>2025 WEAO Technical Symposium and OPCEA Exhibition</u>	WEAO	April 13-15, 2025	RBC London Convention Centre
<u>OWWA Conference & Trade Show 2025</u>	OWWA	May 5-7, 2025	Blue Mountain Resort Village Conference Centre, 242 Jozo Weider Blvd, The Blue Mountains, ON L9Y 3Z2
<u>2025 Northeastern Ontario Water Works Conference</u>	OWWA	May 28-29, 2025	Timmins, ON

LEGEND

CWWA: The Canadian Water and Wastewater Association

OOWA: Ontario Onsite Wastewater Association

OWWA: Ontario Water Works Association

WEAO: Water Environment Association of Ontario

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