



# Become a Certified Drinking Water Operator

Drinking Water Branch

(317) 232-8603 • (800) 451-6027

[www.idem.IN.gov](http://www.idem.IN.gov)

100 N. Senate Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46204

The purpose of this guidance document is to provide direction to anyone who may want to pursue a rewarding career by becoming a Certified Drinking Water Operator. A water operator has many responsibilities ranging from monitoring water usage, monitoring water quality, and chemically treating water. We have many resources that will guide you in your pursuit of a career in drinking water. Information varies depending on your interests such as; types of certifications required to operate a water treatment plant and/or water distribution system, continuing education hours needed to stay current with the water industry challenges of today, paper and online exams, and more. If you have an interest in becoming a certified operator, contact your local utilities to find out about entry level jobs at their drinking water facilities or contact IDEM's Drinking Water Branch at 317-234-7430.

IDEM's [Drinking Water Watch](#) website provides contact information for public water supplies to help you find a plant that is willing to mentor you into becoming a water operator.

In order to become a certified operator of a water treatment plant or water distribution system, you must possess the following items:

- High School Diploma or its equivalent;
- Acceptable work experience approved by IDEM;
- Pass the certification examination required by IDEM.

### **Acceptable Experience:**

Per 327 IAC 8-12-1, "Acceptable Experience" means employment in the actual hands-on operation of a water treatment plant or water distribution system. Experience in water treatment plant maintenance or water treatment plant laboratory that directly relates to plant operation will be given a maximum of 50% credit for operational experience for those employed solely in that respective area. Acceptable experience must be obtained under the supervision of a certified operator or otherwise by demonstrating to IDEM that the applicant's experience meets the requirements.

Some examples of what IDEM will consider as treatment plant activities for qualifying experience are:

- operating mechanical equipment related to process control;
- maintaining mechanical equipment related to process control;
- collecting and analyzing chemical and biological samples related to process control and regulatory compliance activities;
- performing calculations related to process control;
- preparing or standardizing chemical and biological solutions;
- interpreting, compiling, and completing monitoring data;
- recommending appropriate process control measures;
- participating in onsite assessment, inspection, or evaluation of plant processes;
- calibrating chemical feed systems;
- using equipment to monitor and measure flows through a water system.

How is qualifying experience determined? An applicant should provide detailed descriptions of the treatment plants and/or distribution systems where experience was obtained. An applicant needs to focus on the operating duties and responsibilities for each plant or system where the applicant worked. IDEM assesses the

qualifications for the class of treatment plant/distribution system based on this information. The more detail provided relative to the specific tasks listed under operating experience, the easier it is to evaluate an application.

Each grade of water works operator certification requires a specific amount of acceptable work experience that has been obtained under the supervision of an appropriately certified operator. The operator rule and requirements can be found at [327 IAC 8-12 \[PDF\]](#).

### **Examination:**

Once an individual has their technical hands-on experience, they can apply to take the state water operator exam. The certification examination application can be found at IDEM Forms under Public Water Supply: Application For Water Treatment Plant and Water Distribution System Operator Certification - 12094 [\[PDF\]](#) [\[DOC\]](#). These applications must be filled out completely and accurately in order to process them. The application process begins when IDEM receives an application with the required fee of thirty dollars (\$30) per grade of exam being requested. A new exam application and fee must be submitted each time before an exam can be attempted. The fee does not change with the grade of certification exam being requested.

Applicants who qualify, will receive an approval letter with instructions on how to schedule their exam appointment with one of Ivy Tech's twenty-four (24) testing sites around the state. There is an additional forty dollar (\$40) testing site fee per exam and grade of certification examination that must be paid to Ivy Tech. Through these Ivy Tech test sites, the exams are available by appointment with some sites operating six (6) days a week with both day and evening times. Below is a link to the list of all the Ivy Tech Testing locations throughout Indiana. IDEM offers a paper exam annually in November. A testing site fee will not be charged to applicants who take the exam in November at the Indiana Government Center in Indianapolis.

- [IDEM Formula and Conversion Tables \[PDF\]](#)
- [Drinking Water Certification Application Instructions](#)
- [Drinking Water Operator Certification Exam Dates](#)
- [Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana Testing Locations \[PDF\]](#)
- Public Water Supply: Application For Water Treatment Plant and Water Distribution System Operator Certification – 12094 [\[PDF\]](#) [\[DOC\]](#) (available on the [IDEM Forms](#) page)

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact our Drinking Water Operator Certification program at 317-234-7430.