



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

100 N. Senate Avenue • Indianapolis, IN 46204
(800) 451-6027 • (317) 232-8603 • Fax (317) 233-6647 • www.idem.IN.gov

Mike Braun
Governor

Clint Woods
Commissioner

September 29, 2026

Tera Fong
EPA R5 Water Division Director
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
77 West Jackson Boulevard, WD-15J
Chicago, Illinois 60604-3590

Dear Ms. Fong:

Re: Triennial Indiana's Governor's
Report 2024-2026

The Drinking Water Branch of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Office of Water Quality is pleased to submit the attached report *Triennial Indiana Governor's Report 2024-2026*. The purpose of this document is to report to Governor Braun the effectiveness of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management's capacity development program for the 2024 – 2026 time period.

If you have any questions or comments concerning this report, please contact me at (317) 234-7437 or Alex Powers at (317) 232-5103.

Sincerely,

Matthew Prater, Branch Chief
Drinking Water Branch
Office of Water Quality

Enclosure

cc: Victoria Heath, EPA Region V
Mark Ackerman, EPA Region V
Cynthia Meyer, EPA Region V
Elizabeth Murphy, EPA Region V





2024 – 2026 Indiana Governor's Report

Updates, success stories, and data from IDEM's Drinking Water Branch
spanning from July 1, 2023-June 30, 2026

Capacity
Development &
Operator
Certification

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Background

Every three years, the Drinking Water Branch (DWB) prepares a report detailing the status and efficacy of the Capacity Development Strategy. This report is part of the requirements of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) Guidance on Implementing the Capacity Development provisions of the 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act. These amendments focus on reducing drinking water contamination and encouraging the proper management of public water systems, all to support the adequate public supply of safe and clean drinking water to Hoosiers and visitors alike.

Introduction

Indiana's Drinking Water Branch (DWB) continues to advance its mission of safeguarding public health through comprehensive oversight, proactive technical assistance, and consistent evaluation of system performance across the state's public water systems. Guided by the Capacity Development Strategy, originally developed in 2000 and updated in 2022, the DWB sections work collectively to ensure that Indiana's public water systems maintain strong technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) capacity and reliably provide safe, adequate drinking water to Hoosiers. This 2024–2026 Governor's Report summarizes the effectiveness of these programs from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2026, highlighting improvements in system compliance, operator competency, infrastructure management, cybersecurity resilience, and technical support. It also evaluates key performance trends such as Lead Service Line Inventory completion rates, ETT scores of newly activated systems, assessment activities, certification updates, and workforce development efforts.

Prepared in accordance with Section 1420(c)(3) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), this report fulfills Indiana's federal requirement to demonstrate the continued efficacy of its Capacity Development Strategy. The timely submission of this report by September 30 every three years ensures eligibility to receive its full allocation of Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) dollars. If not submitted on time, the Program risks losing twenty percent (20%) of the allotted annual Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). By documenting progress, challenges, and evolving needs, this report provides Governor Braun and the public with a transparent, comprehensive overview of how Indiana's drinking water programs continue to protect consumers, support operators, strengthen system resilience, and uphold high compliance standards statewide. This report will be available on website and announced on social media.

Objectives

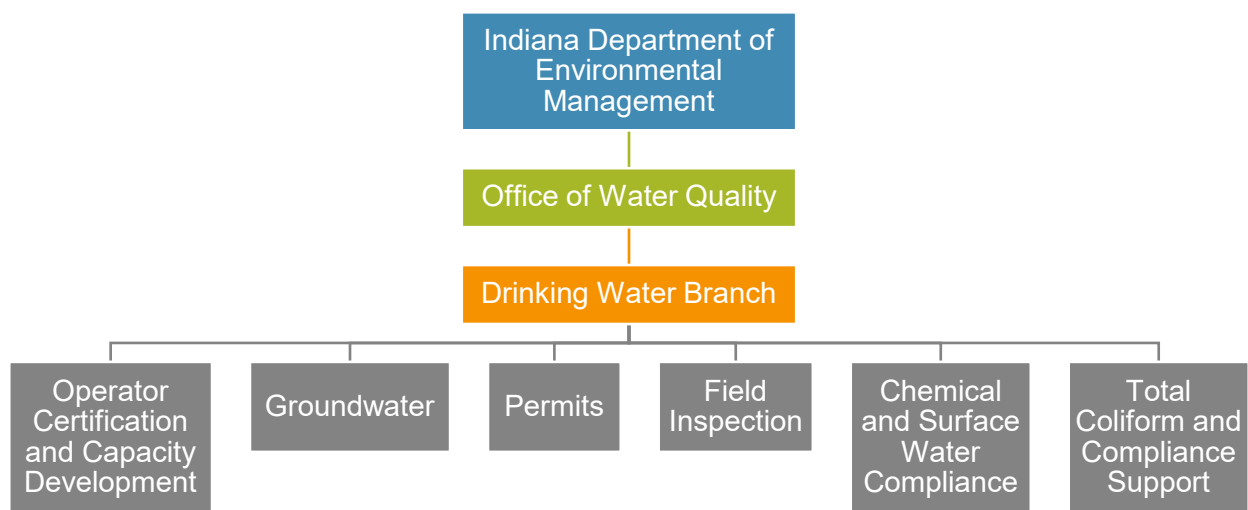
The Drinking Water Branch carries out the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) which is designed to ensure that Public Water Supplies (PWS) deliver water to Hoosier homes and businesses that is adequate in quantity and safe to drink.

IDEM ensures that the three important public health objectives are met by the Capacity Development and Operator Certification Program: (1) that customers of any public water system are provided with a safe and adequate supply of potable drinking water; (2) that consumers are confident their water system is managed properly so that the water is safe to drink; and (3) that

public water system operators are trained and certified to have the knowledge and understanding of drinking water standards and the public health importance of properly maintaining and managing a public drinking water system. IDEM can confirm there are sufficient resources for the Capacity Development and Operator Certification Program and will continue meeting the federal program standards for operator certification.

Indiana's Drinking Water Branch

The Operator Certification and Capacity Development (OpCert/CapDev) section is housed in the Drinking Water Branch (DWB) in the Office of Water Quality (OWQ) within the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). Below is the list of sections within the Branch that support this program:



The Operator Certification & Capacity Development Section consists of two state programs; the Capacity Development (CapDev) Program, and the Operator Certification (OpCert) Program. The CapDev Program has two components designed to help ensure the provision of safe and adequate drinking water supplies: the first assists drinking water systems to help them acquire and maintain sufficient technical, managerial, and financial capacity to effectively operate their system; the second ensures that new community and non-transient non-community (NTNC) public water systems understand the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act and have the capability to meet those requirements prior to operation. The OpCert Program oversees system management, ensuring that every public water system is operated under the responsible charge of a properly licensed operator. It is responsible for the certification and licensing of drinking water operators, verification of experience and continuing education, and provides operator support through materials and resources.

The Groundwater Section reviews Wellhead Protection and Source Water Threat Minimization Response Plans, tracks the [Groundwater Monitoring Network](#), and PFAS sampling, and conducts site visits for sampling and well location. In 2025, this section won 2025 the Indiana Water Resources Association's Outstanding Achievement Award (Public Sector) for their work on PFAS sampling.

The Permits Section reviews the designs for public water system construction projects, issues construction permits, provides technical assistance for construction concerns and requirements, and implements Indiana’s Cross Connection Control and Backflow Prevention program. As needed, this section will perform site visits to ensure the construction is in conformance with the plans as they were submitted.

The Field Inspections Section conducts sanitary surveys, documents deficiencies and tracks their subsequent corrective actions, provides technical assistance, investigates citizen complaints, coordinates enforcement actions, approves new well site locations, reviews and updates site sampling plans, conducts level two assessments, investigates potential new systems, and receives, reviews, and indexes Monthly Report of Operations (MRO).

The Chemical and Surface Water Compliance Section has staff dedicated to monitoring system compliance with chemical monitoring (VOCs, SOCs, IOCs, Radionuclides, and Asbestos), Disinfection Byproducts and Surface Water Treatment, Lead and Copper, Nitrate/Nitrite, PFAS, and Consumer Confidence Reporting requirements. Additionally, staff are dedicated to tracking routine monitoring, sending lead consumer notices, and responding to action level exceedances.

The Total Coliform and Compliance Support Section provides technical assistance to Public Water Systems (PWS) for the provisions that fall under the Revised Total Coliform Rule (RTCR) and Ground Water Rule (GWR). This section also maintains the Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS), issues mass communications through Interactive Voice Response (IVR) messages and creates specific data reports for internal and external use. In coordination with the rest of the Drinking Water Branch, this section creates Enforcement referrals and maintains the Small System Lab Assistance Program (SSLAP) to assist eligible systems in receiving free sampling bottles and analyses. Due to the recurring monitoring frequency, RTCR violations make up most violations issued to systems.

Capacity Development

Efficacy of Strategy

The compliance sections compile the Annual Compliance Reports (ACRs), which show the trend in system compliance with drinking water rules and regulations. See Appendix A, B, and C for the last three years’ ACRs.

Lead Service Line Inventories

During the past three years, we have anticipated and then formally adopted the new lead and copper rules, which required systems of specific sizes to complete Lead Service Line Inventories LSLI by October 16, 2024. During the first reporting period requiring the inventories, ninety-seven percent (97%) of systems submitted their inventory on time. The second reporting year had a ninety-nine point two percent (99.2%) compliance rate. This exemplifies how the DWB effectively communicated the new rules to affected systems and operators to smoothly roll out the requirements.

Newly Activated Systems with ETT Scores

The efficacy of the CapDev Strategy is highlighted in the overall decrease of newly activated systems, which include systems activated within three years of the reporting period, with ETT scores. If a system has a score of 11 or higher, they are typically referred to enforcement. Below is the number of these systems for the last three years:

ETT score	Number of systems with this score FY 24	Number of systems with this score FY 25	Number of systems with this score FY 26
1	36	0	16
2-10	50	5	39
11<	4	5	7
<i>Highest Score</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>36</i>
Total	90	10	62

In 2023, the Branch created the Capacity Development Coordinator position with the goal of assisting newly activated systems and new operators navigate the drinking water rules and regulations. This employee will visit with systems and walk through paperwork and the distribution system, recommending corrections outside of a formal inspection. It is believed that this role has aided in the decrease of systems that obtain ETT scores shortly after activation.

Level 2 and Level 1 Assessments

Over the years, we have had staff members perform level 1 and level 2 assessments for systems throughout the state of Indiana. A level 1 assessment is triggered when a system has two or more positive TC samples within one month, or if a system has more than 5% samples positive for TC. If a system triggers two level 1 assessments within a 12-month period, or has a sample test positive for *E. coli*, they trigger a level 2 assessment. Both assessments require the operator to walk through the system to assess any potential sources of contamination, though a level 2 assessment must be conducted by a certified level 2 assessor, so long as they did not perform the level 1 assessment.

Fiscal Year	Level 1 Assessments	Level 2 Assessments
2024	211	164
2025	220	177
2026	216	211

Asset Management (AM) Assistance

Assisting PWSs develop or implement Asset Management Plans

In 2024 the DWB hired a part-time staff member with over forty-five years of experience in drinking water to provide technical assistance for community public water systems that have had recurrent compliance issues. This member can thoroughly assess technical, managerial, and financial capacity at these systems to ensure the system has the infrastructure and support to supply adequate drinking water. These visits further give the system the opportunity and justification to discuss replacement or rehabilitation, while also allowing the OpCert/CapDev staff to provide assistance where they can and notice any recurring trends with other systems

across Indiana. The biggest issue identified is lack of adequate succession plans as drinking water operators age.

The Indiana Finance Authority (IFA) created an Asset Management Program guidance in 2024 since an Asset Management Plan is required of systems seeking funding through IFA. That guidance can be found on [IFA's website](#). This Plan is intended to allow systems time to assess their current and future infrastructure needs, something that may be overlooked in day-to-day operation.

IURC Asset Management Requirement

While IDEM does not have rules or regulations requiring asset management plans, the Indiana Utility Regulatory Council (IURC) implemented a new requirement for all community systems to complete an asset management plan by a specified date per [House Enrolled Act 1459](#). Systems whose names begin with a letter between A-L were required to complete their plan by July 1, 2026; systems whose names began with a letter between M-Z are required to complete their plan by July 1, 2027.

Technical, Managerial, and Financial (TMF) Assistance

Groundwater Section

In 2025, the Groundwater Section received an Outstanding Achievement award from the Indiana Water Resources Association for the public sector for the section's PFAS sampling, highlighting the dedication and diligence of staff with sampling community systems throughout Indiana. With a federal grant from U.S. EPA and a state funding match from IFA, the Groundwater Section continued sampling community and non-transient non-community systems in Indiana, completing the five phases of [their PFAS sampling project](#). This allowed childcare facilities and schools to have PFAS sampling courtesy of the State.

Field Inspection Section

During the last few fiscal years, the Field Inspection Section has increased the number of inspectors to sixteen (16) field staff, resulting in more eyes on systems and more time that can be spent with these systems to evaluate their compliance, provide technical assistance, or catch issues before they snowball into bigger concerns.

New Systems

When an NTNC or Community PWS is proposed in Indiana, they are required to complete a Water System Management Plan (WSMP). The DWB updated their WSMP Handbook to better assist systems that are compiling a WMP to demonstrate TMF capacity in the near and distant futures. The updates to this Handbook make it easier to understand the Rule and is intended for systems, engineers, accountants, geologists, board members, and anyone else involved in the laborious process of compiling the Plan.

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity is now a critical pillar of safeguarding drinking water systems in Indiana, as drinking water utilities increasingly rely on digital technologies such as SCADA, industrial control systems, remote access tools, and networked monitoring devices. This digitization

expands operational efficiency but also exposes vital infrastructure to cyber threats including malware, social engineering, remote-access attacks, weak credentials, outdated software, etc. These vulnerabilities threaten the reliability of processes, creating direct risks to public health.

To strengthen protections, Indiana established robust legislative support through Senate Enrolled Act 459 (SEA 459), effective July 1, 2025. The law requires community water systems serving five hundred (500) or more people, publicly owned and semi-public Class III and IV wastewater treatment systems to conduct annual cybersecurity vulnerability assessments, designate cybersecurity incident reporters, and meet mandatory reporting timelines when breaches occur (within 24 hours if operations are affected or within two business days otherwise). These requirements improve coordination with the Indiana Office of Technology (IOT) and IDEM, ensuring rapid response and limiting the potential impact of cyber incidents. SEA 459 also introduces biennial certification obligations and codifies expectations for utilities to maintain cybersecurity readiness, while aligning certification obligations with Indiana's water audit validation schedule.

Beyond legislation, Indiana provides extensive statewide support. IDEM and IOT offer risk assessment guidance, free tools, and technical assistance, including access to AWWA's cybersecurity assessment platform and EPA/CISA cybersecurity resources on [IDEM's cybersecurity website](#). Workshops funded by the Indiana Finance Authority help water operators strengthen cyber defense practices, particularly in small and rural systems that often lack dedicated cybersecurity staff. Cyberattacks on water utilities in Indiana prompted expanded collaboration, outreach, and training to help utilities adopt best practices, mitigate vulnerabilities, and enhance resilience. This combination of enforced requirements and state-supported capacity-building improves risk detection, accelerates incident reporting, reduces operational downtime, and strengthens system resilience. These measures ensure utilities can continue providing safe, reliable drinking water and maintain public trust while meeting both state and federal SDWA 1433 cybersecurity requirements.

Case Studies

Asset Management & New Opportunities

A sanitary survey in 2023 revealed a community system that was in significant disrepair. This community system was in the process of transitioning to another treatment plant that was using an alternative form of treatment and had yet to fully switch. The sanitary survey resulted in multiple corrections of the former plant that gave the community system and the town the encouragement and justification to completely transition to the new treatment system, allowing the former plant to be inactivated. This case study is one example of how crucial sanitary surveys are and how they can incentivize tough decisions to allow the continued supply of safe drinking water.

The Importance of Succession Planning

A small community system was left without a certified operator when the previous operator passed away, and the back-up operator was experiencing cognitive difficulties. A family member contacted IDEM for help with finding another operator to assume responsibility of the system. IDEM worked extensively to try to find a local PWS to connect to the system or to find another certified operator to take over. IDEM also evaluated if the treatment that was in place at the

system was necessary. If the treatment could be safely discontinued, it would reduce the classification and monitoring requirements without endangering the consumers. Fortunately, someone in the community stepped up to become the certified operator in responsible charge of the system, returning them to compliance. This situation highlights the importance of systems to have succession plans and asset management plans in place, should similar systems arise.

Operator Certification

Indiana continues to make steady and meaningful progress in strengthening its Operator Certification Program, advancing both the effectiveness and accountability of drinking water system operations across the state. Through ongoing stakeholder engagement, targeted program improvements, and consistent evaluation of certification processes, Indiana has enhanced operator competency, supported system compliance, and reinforced its commitment to protecting public health. The state remains dedicated to continuous improvement and will maintain strong collaboration with operators, utilities, training organizations, and federal partners to ensure the program continues to meet evolving needs and regulatory expectations.

Classifications

System and Operator Classification

Indiana's drinking water systems are classified by both treatment (WT) and distribution (DS), with operators in responsible charge needing to hold licenses that are of the same classification. There are three distribution classifications: DSS (small), DSM (medium), and DSL (large). Treatment plants can be classified as either WT0, WT1, WT2, WT3, WT4, WT5, or WT6. The class "WT0" is not defined in the IAC because it is assigned to public water systems that do not employ any type of water treatment and are sourcing from ground water. WT1, WT2, and WT3 systems also are sourcing their water from ground water, but they all employ varying levels of treatment and thus are defined in the IAC. For surface water systems sourcing either solely surface water, ground water under direct influence (GWUDI), or a combination of surface and ground water, they are classified as either WT4 or WT5. Indiana's WT6 classification is intended to provide room for emerging or novel treatment that was not previously defined in our code. Within Indiana, there are only two (2) WT6 systems, and they both utilize membrane filtration for their treatments. The Southern WT6 facility is a DST6 community system, providing drinking water to a population of one thousand five hundred (1,500) residents and the Northern WT6 facility is a DLT6 community system, providing drinking water to a population of twenty-six thousand three hundred and seventy (26,370) residents. The system classification criteria can be found in 327 IAC 8-12-2.

Facility Management

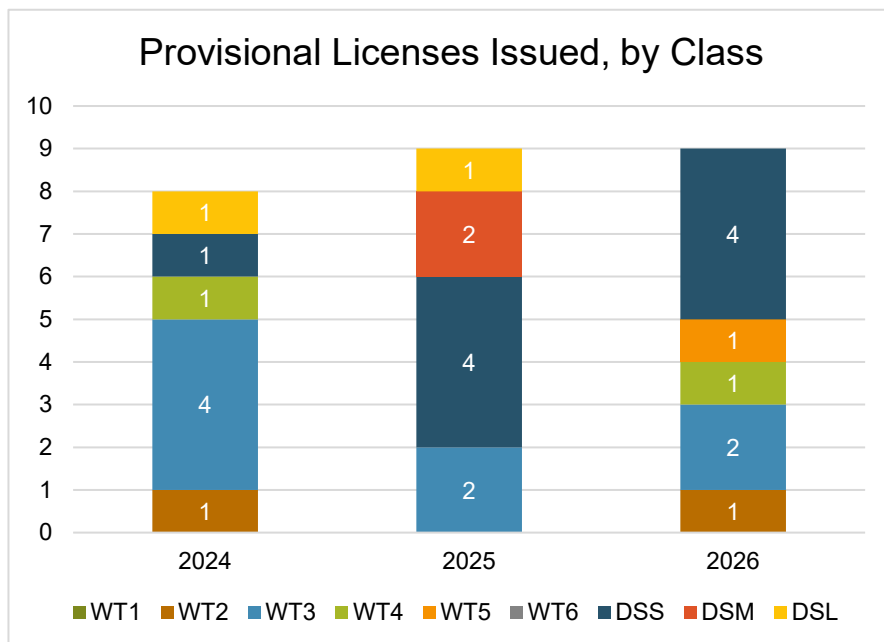
The Indiana Department of Environmental Management, per IAC, requires the owners of all community or NTNC systems to have a certified operator in responsible charge. The CORC is defined as "the person designated by the owner or governing body of a water treatment plant or water distribution system to be the certified operator who has complete responsibility for the proper operation of a water treatment plant or water distribution system; and makes decisions regarding the daily operational activities that will directly impact the quality or quantity of

drinking water”. To determine if the CORC is a suitable fit for the PWS, the operator must hold certification(s) that are equal or appropriately acceptable to the classification of the PWS.

Temporary Operator Certifications: Provisional

In the event of an operator vacancy due to death, resignation, extended illness, or other circumstances beyond the control of the governing body or owner, a Provisional Certification may be issued. This certification may also be called a “temporary certification.” This certification may be granted when an applicant has the appropriate education and/or experience for testing but has not yet sat for the exam. While the PWS has a provisional operator, they are in compliance with IDEM and the CORC requirement. From 2024 to 2026, twenty-four (24) provisional licenses were issued.

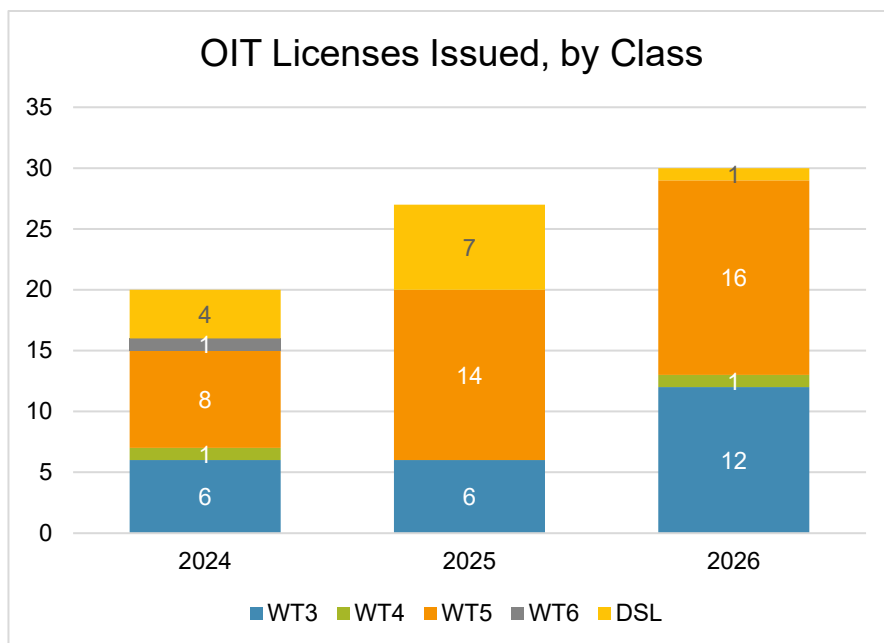
Class	2024	2025	2026
WT1			
WT2	1		1
WT3	4	2	2
WT4	1		1
WT5			1
WT6			
DSS	1	4	4
DSM		2	
DSL	1	1	
Total	8	9	9



Temporary Operator Certifications: Operator-in-Training

Indiana utilizes an operator in training (OIT) certification. To be eligible for this classification, the applicant must be currently employed at a class DSL, WT3, WT4, or WT5 system, and must meet the basic requirements for the classification of the system, except for the hands-on requirement, which they learn while employed. The applicant can then apply to sit for the exam at the level of the plant or distribution system at which they are employed. If they pass the certification exam, they carry the classification of OIT until the hands-on experience requirements are met and they become a certified operator. From 2024 to 2026, seventy-seven (77) operator-in-training licenses were issued.

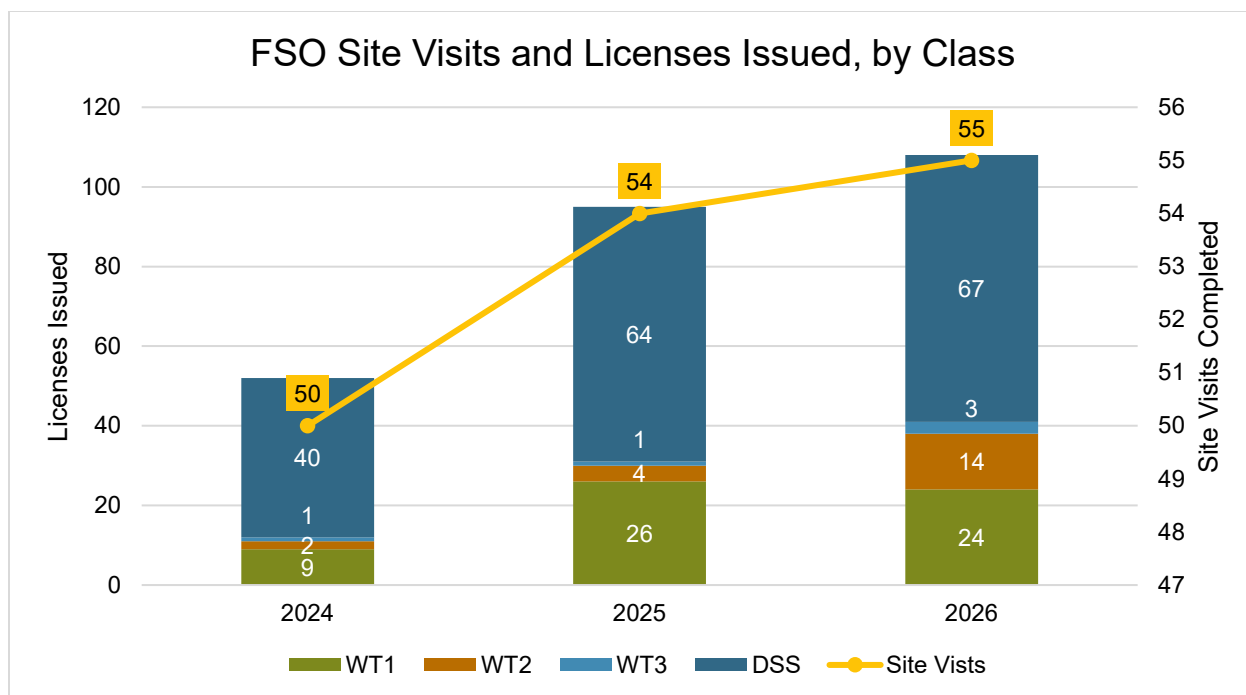
Class	2024	2025	2026
WT3	6	6	12
WT4	1		1
WT5	8	14	16
WT6	1		
DSL	4	7	1
Total	20	27	30



Facility-Specific Operator (FSO) Program

A public water system in Indiana may qualify to use a Facility Specific Operator (FSO) when it falls within certain small-system classifications and meets specific administrative conditions. Eligible systems include non-transient non-community public water systems classified as DSS or WT1, and occasionally WT2 or WT3, so long as the IDEM Commissioner determines the applicant can properly operate the system. Community systems serving 100 or fewer people in the DSS or WT1 classifications may qualify. To obtain an FSO, the system owner must designate an individual who is an employee or member of the water system to be in responsible charge. An FSO certification applies only to the specific facility for which it is granted and remains valid for three years, during which the operator must complete continuing education requirements outlined in 327 IAC 8-12-7.5. The certification becomes invalid if the system's classification changes to one requiring more advanced credentials, such as due to increased capacity, population served, or changes in treatment complexity. Total numbers of site visits and FSO licenses issued are below:

Class	2024	2025	2026	Total
WT1	9	26	24	59
WT2	2	4	14	20
WT3	1	1	3	5
DSS	40	64	67	171
Grand Total	52	95	108	255
<i>Site Visits</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>159</i>



Becoming an Operator

Requirements to be an Operator

All certified drinking water operators in the state of Indiana must take and pass an exam for each classification that demonstrates the necessary knowledge, judgement, and skills needed for the specific classification. Each public water supply's classification must have an operator licensed in the same classification, corresponding to distribution and treatment levels. In addition to taking and passing the operator exams, applicants are to meet Indiana's education and experience requirements.

The educational requirement to sit for an operator exam in Indiana is for the applicant to have completed high school or the equivalent. During the application process, we require educational experience to be listed so that we can certify that the applicant has at least a high school diploma or a GED. This requirement is consistent for all exam applicants, and the only exception is for site-specific operators, which do not have a requirement. This exception for site-specific applicants allows us to train members of Indiana's Amish communities; as they typically finish schooling after 8th grade.

The experience that is required of the applicant is directly related to and thus defined by the certification they are wishing to obtain. For a candidate pursuing the WT3, WT4, WT5, or WT6 classifications, college credit in a related field can apply towards appropriate experience.

Exam Application Process

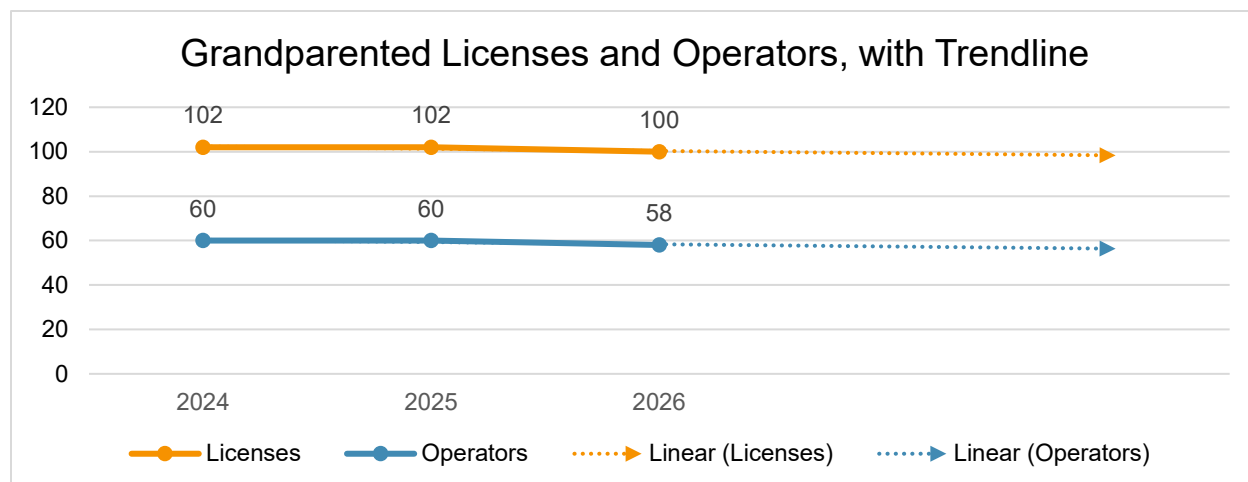
IDEM works with Ivy Tech, Indiana's largest community College, to proctor exams at one of their twenty-four (24) campuses, allowing exam participants more opportunities to sit for the exam. Through these Ivy Tech campuses the exams are available five days a week with some

locations offering availability on Saturdays or evenings. When an applicant completes their exam, IDEM will send official notification of exam results to all applicants by way of letter. Those who receive a score of seventy percent (70%) or higher pass their respective exam(s) and are not an Operator in Training (OIT) will receive their certificate and a renewal card under separate cover. Applicants who did not receive a satisfactory score will have an opportunity to review their respective exam(s) within ninety (90) days from the date of their exam(s). This review is conducted at the central IDEM office under OpCert staff supervision. This review not only gives the individual an opportunity to see their strengths and weaknesses in the various categories of questions respective to their grade of certification exam but also allows them an opportunity to justify their answer to exam questions. If their comments can be confirmed by research and verification of subject matter in reference materials, their score can be adjusted accordingly.

Grandparented Operators

Grandparenting, established under 327 IAC 8-12-3.4, was created to ensure that experienced drinking water system personnel could obtain certification during the transition to Indiana's modern operator-certification requirements. Before the effective date of the rule, certain water treatment plants and distribution systems were not required to be supervised by certified operators. When the certification program was expanded, the grandparenting provision allowed the commissioner to issue operator certifications to individuals who had been making process-control decisions affecting water quality or quantity at these systems, provided that the system owner applied for their certification before September 1, 2002, and the operator met conditions outlined in the rule.

After the FY26 renewal period, Indiana has fifty-eight (58) grandfathered operators holding a combined one hundred (100) licenses. Of the one thousand three hundred and seventy-three (1,373) systems that require a certified operator in responsible charge, only thirty-five (35) have CORCs with grandfathered licenses, amounting to about 2.55%. FY25 had forty-five (45) systems with grandfathered CORCs, so we are seeing the trend continue to decline across renewals and system operations.



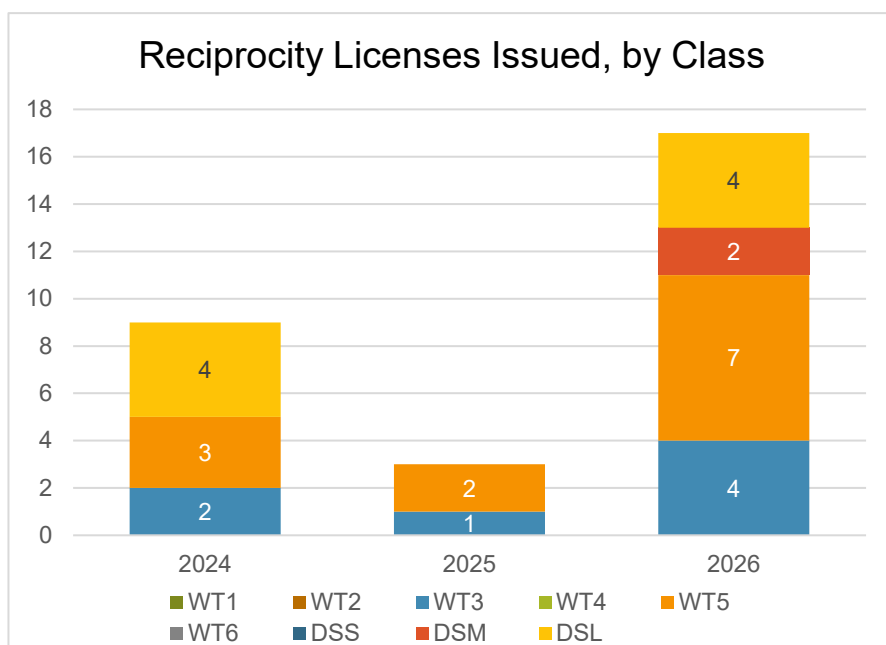
Reciprocity

An individual interested in seeking Indiana drinking water operator certification by way of reciprocity must have a valid drinking water operator certification from another state. The applicant is required to complete an Indiana application; more specifically, State Form 12094, and submit the necessary fee of \$30 per grade of Indiana certification the applicant is requesting. The applicant will need to check the box “By reciprocity,” on the first page of the application. When completing the application, the applicant will need to enter their certificate number and grade/classification of certification they currently hold in another State, as well as provide a copy of their certification. The applicant will proceed to complete the three-page form providing the required information, including work the individual has or is performing at a utility in the State where they have certification.

Once the application(s) and fee(s) have been received, a questionnaire will be forwarded to the certification office of the State where the applicant has certification. The questionnaire asks pertinent questions about their certification(s) such as validity, highest/lowest grade levels of certification, how was the certification acquired (ABC/WPI exams, in-house written), experience required for the grade level of certification held, any enforcement issues, does the State accept operators from the State of Indiana to a comparable grade of certification. If the State from which an individual has certification does not accept Indiana operators, then reciprocity is automatically denied per IC 13-18-11-9(2).

The experience information from the application and questionnaire will be reviewed and a comparison of the water works operator certification rules of the two (2) states will be conducted. Once that is complete, a determination is made and the applicant will be notified by mail. From 2024 to 2026, twenty-nine (29) reciprocity licenses were issued.

Class	2024	2025	2026
WT1			
WT2			
WT3	2	1	4
WT4			
WT5	3	2	7
WT6			
DSS			
DSM			2
DSL	4		4
Total	9	3	17



Certification Renewal

Renewal Cycle

Indiana's drinking water operator certification follows a triennial (three-year) renewal cycle. Certified operators must complete required continuing education units (CEUs) during each three-year period to maintain eligibility for renewal. The renewal deadline occurs every June 30, aligning with IDEM's statewide operator licensing schedule. Operators must both complete their CEU requirements and submit a \$30 renewal fee to maintain active certification status. Renewals may be completed online through MyLicense.IN.gov or by mailing the IDEM Operator Renewal Form along with payment.

To strengthen compliance and reduce certification gaps, an enhanced communication strategy was implemented to supplement the formal PLA renewal letter issued each May. This strategy used targeted IVR outreach to facility-specific operators and grace-period operators who were most at risk of missing deadlines. In 2026, statewide IVR notifications were sent to all certified operators to reinforce CEU requirements, the June 30 deadline, and to inform them of slight technical changes to the renewal portal that have occurred. These additional and supplemental reminders are delivered early in the renewal cycle to ensure operators receive multiple, timely messages that support successful renewal completion. Each year since 2024, post-deadline correspondence has been sent to individuals who failed to renew on time, providing direction on corrective steps to minimize operational disruptions. Collectively, these expanded communication measures improve renewal rates, reduce operational risk, and help maintain uninterrupted compliance and certified operator coverage across Indiana's drinking water systems.

Continuing Education

In Indiana, all drinking water operators must obtain the necessary training and continuing education to cover all the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are required for their license classification(s). The number of CEUs varies by certification grade, ranging from 10 to 30 contact hours, with at least 70% of those hours required in technical topics related to water treatment or distribution operations. The amount required continuing education for each classification can be found in 327 IAC 8-12-7.5.

License Class	Minimum Technical Hours Required for Renewal	Total Hours Required
DSS	7	10
DSM	10.5	15
DSL	10.5	15
WT1	7	10
WT2	10.5	15
WT3	17.5	25
WT4	21	30
WT5	21	30
WT6	21	30

Recertification

If an operator has let their license(s) lapse and expire, they will need to reapply and sit for the exam once again to regain the certification. The process for applying is the same as any other operator application to sit for the exam; they must have the appropriate experience, education, and the

approval of the certified operator in responsible charge who has supervised and then signed off on the applicant's application.

Operator Certification Success Stories

Updating the Exam Materials

Over the past several fiscal years, Indiana's OpCert Program has made transformative progress in improving the tools and resources available to drinking water operators. These enhancements, spanning study guides, the Indiana Drinking Water Operator Training (IDWOT) Manual, and a multi-year overhaul of exam questions, have significantly strengthened exam preparedness and improved operator testing outcomes.

The effort began with a complete modernization of the study guides. Previously considered outdated and insufficient, the guides underwent a full revision starting in 2024, resulting in the release of new WT1–WT3 materials, followed by the full publication of WT1–WT5 guides in 2025. These updated resources provided clearer content, were updated to current industry practices, and improved alignment with the actual exam structure, giving operators practical, relevant preparation tools that had long been needed.

Parallel to these improvements, the agency launched an extensive update of the Indiana Drinking Water Operator Training (IDWOT) Manual. Recognizing that the former IDWOT Manual no longer reflected modern standards, staff restructured and rewrote the manual with meticulous attention to accuracy and consistency. By 2025, the manual's transformation included separating content into three specialized areas: Distribution, Groundwater, and Surface Water. The Distribution Manual was published in January 2025, with quality-focused revisions continuing into June. These changes have created a more accessible, targeted, and professional resource that bridges the gap between classroom learning and the realities of water system operation.

Perhaps the most impactful improvement has come from the exam question validation initiative. Beginning in FY 2024 and continuing through FY 2026, IDEM partnered with a diverse stakeholder workgroup, including operators, industry partners, and subject matter experts, to thoroughly review and refine exam questions across all exam grades. Early successes included the full revision and release of the WT3 exam (live March 15, 2023), followed by the WT4 and WT5 updates published on January 2, 2025. The WT1 exam also underwent review and modernization, with examinees reporting that updated content felt more relevant, fair, and reflective of real-world operator duties. In 2026, the review expanded to include WT2 and all distribution exams, with deeper analysis of question clarity, difficulty, and content balance. Quarterly performance reports from Ivy Tech, detailing question behavior, answer patterns, and anomalies, enabled data-driven decision-making. This continuous monitoring revealed a slight but meaningful increase in pass rates following early-year revisions, demonstrating the direct and positive impact of the improvements. These trends not only validated the work completed so far but also provided a roadmap for future refinements.

As a result of these efforts, Indiana operators now have access to clearer, more modern, and more effective preparation materials than ever before. The combination of updated study guides, revamped training manuals, and validated exam questions has improved exam relevance, strengthened fairness, and contributed to measurable increases in exam performance. Through

collaboration, careful analysis, and a commitment to quality, IDEM has built a stronger foundation for operator success; one that will continue to support safe and reliable drinking water operations across the state.

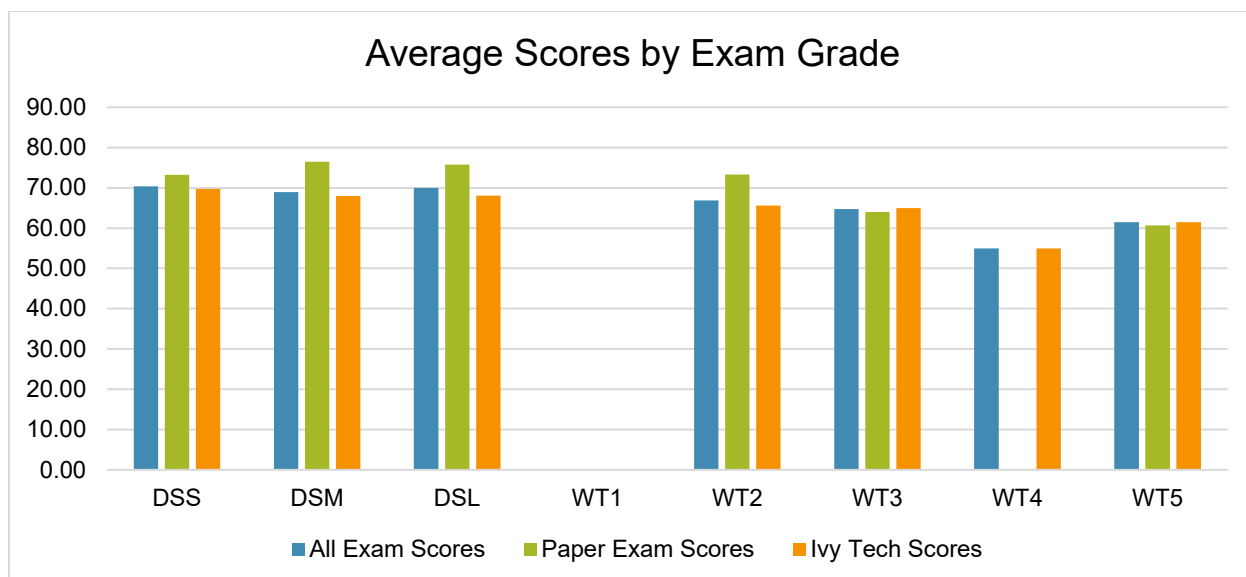
Reviving the Paper Exam

Indiana requires that its water treatment and distribution operator exams, which are typically delivered via computer-based testing through Ivy Tech, also be made available in pencil-and-paper format at least once each year. This requirement is mandated in 327 IAC 8-12-4, which states the standardized exams for certified operators “shall be ... conducted at least annually”. In FY24, the paper exam was offered but only one person applied and sat for the exam. In FY25, there were no applicants to sit for the paper exam. Working alongside technical assistance providers in the state, there was a collective decision to change how the paper exam could be conducted with the hope of success, measured by improved passing rates, overall scores, and a higher proportion of licenses issued to exams taken.

The OpCert program was able to provide two paper examination events during the monitoring period. In collaboration with the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water and the Indiana Section of American Water Works Association, we proctored an exam on November 9th, 2025. Monday through Thursday of this examination week, test takers had the opportunity to attend an exam preparation series and prepare for their exams being taken at the end of the week. Applicants could either attend in-person or hybrid, and likewise, applicants could either sit for the in-person, paper exam or they could register to take the exam online at Ivy Tech. For the November examination event, we had eighty-five (85) applicants in the prep class and of these, sixty-six (66) took the in-person paper exam. This event was so helpful and popular that due to the demand, we held another paper examination event on May 9th, 2026. Similarly, the applicants went through a week-long review leading up until the Friday exam. For the May examination event, we had fifty-two (52) applicants in the prep class, and these applicants took sixty-four (64) paper exams in person and one at Ivy Tech.

The exam preparation for the paper exams in May and November was created by Scott Ham of Indiana American Water. With these paper examination events, in union with the study week, we saw significant improvement in operator test scores. The differences of these scores, in comparison to other scores of the same classifications can be found below:

Exam Grade	All Exam Scores	Paper Exam Scores	Ivy Tech Scores
DSS	70.34	73.20	69.76
DSM	68.93	76.50	67.98
DSL	69.97	75.74	68.03
WT1	No exams taken	No exams taken	No exams taken
WT2	66.84	73.33	65.60
WT3	64.73	64.02	64.95
WT4	54.93	No exams taken	54.93
WT5	61.45	60.71	61.50
Average	65.31	70.58	64.68



Throughout the FY26 monitoring period, the six hundred eighty-six (686) operator exams had an average score of 65.31%, which is 0.47 higher than FY25's average exam score of 64.84%. This increase in scores can be attributed in part to the efforts made between IDEM and our TA providers to revive the paper exams. The paper exams had an average score of 70.58% between November and May, showing an improvement across the board with our examination efforts. Figure 2 highlights the significance that the paper exams have on overall shifts towards a higher passing ratio. While average scores on the operator exams are important, examining the passing rates provides additional insight into the proportion of test takers who are passing or failing. The passing rates for our operators during the monitoring period can be found in table 4 and are divided by exam class. The visual chart of passing rates for FY26 can be found, with comparisons to FY24 and FY25, in appendix D. Our successful collaboration with technical assistance providers has brought improvements to the relationship IDEM's OpCert section has with future operators, but it also helps strengthen the working relationship that we have with our statewide organizations. For the next monitoring period, we plan to hold Fall and Spring examination events again.

Apprenticeships and Workforce Development

Over the past three years, the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water (AIRW) Apprenticeship Program has become a cornerstone in Indiana's effort to replenish and strengthen the water and wastewater operations workforce. As of January 2026, AIRW had one hundred eight (108) current active apprentices and ninety-four (94) program graduates since enrolling its first apprentice in 2018. The program's two-year structure consists of over two hundred eighty-eight (288) hours of technical instruction and four thousand (4,000) hours of paid, on-the-job training. This ensures that apprentices gain both real-world experience and the technical foundation required to support safe and compliant utility operations statewide.

A key factor in the program's success is its strong alignment with the Indiana OpCert Program. The Program provides apprentices with clear expectations, access to exam study guides, formula sheets, and reference materials, enabling consistent preparation and reducing barriers to successful certification. Exams are authored by IDEM and administered through Ivy Tech,

offering computerized testing at numerous statewide locations with predictable scheduling and standardized delivery.

AIRW's exam-prep courses further reinforce IDEM's competency standards by using the same manuals and certification criteria apprentices will encounter on test day. These instructor-led programs, offered with IDEM participation, improve exam readiness and support higher pass rates across drinking water certification categories. As a combined system, IDEM's structured certification process and AIRW's hands-on apprenticeship model create a reliable and scalable workforce pipeline, ensuring that Indiana communities have access to qualified operators who are prepared to maintain infrastructure, safeguard public health, and support long-term system resilience.

Conclusion

Indiana's drinking water programs have demonstrated measurable progress and strengthened capacity across all major areas of oversight during the 2024–2026 reporting period. The coordinated efforts of the Capacity Development and Operator Certification Programs, supported by the Drinking Water Branch's compliance, inspection, permitting, and groundwater sections, highlight a statewide commitment to protecting public health through safe, reliable drinking water.

Across the reporting period, Indiana saw consistently high compliance rates for Lead Service Line Inventories, improved support for newly activated systems, meaningful reductions in early enforcement cases, and increased clarity and effectiveness in Level 1 and Level 2 assessments. Asset management capacity also continued to grow through expanded guidance and targeted technical assistance. The Operator Certification Program delivered significant improvements in exam materials, study guides, training manuals, and statewide exam events, resulting in stronger operator performance. Workforce development partnerships continue to build a pipeline of trained operators to serve Indiana communities for years to come. Indiana's Drinking Water Branch has also made substantial progress in emerging areas, including cybersecurity readiness. The implementation of SEA 459 and broadened technical support have positioned Indiana as a national leader in water-sector cyber preparedness, reinforcing the resilience of water systems against an evolving set of digital threats.

Overall, the achievements of the monitoring period reflect a robust and responsive program that adapts to regulatory changes, supports system operators, and delivers consistent, statewide improvements in drinking water capacity. Indiana remains committed to continual growth and collaboration with public water systems, operators, technical assistance providers, and federal partners. Through this work, the Drinking Water Branch will continue ensuring that Hoosier communities receive safe, dependable drinking water, and that the state meets all federal requirements for maintaining and enhancing TMF and operator certification capacity.

Appendix

- A. 2023 Annual Compliance Report (ACR)
- B. 2024 Annual Compliance Report (ACR)
- C. 2025 Annual Compliance Report (ACR)
- D. Passing Rate Trends by Class