



STATE OF HAWAII
Board of Certification of Operating Personnel
In Wastewater Treatment Plants
1350 Sand Island Parkway, Bldg. 3A
Honolulu, Hawaii 96819

In reply, please refer to:
File:

March 3, 2010

TO: Sina Pruder, Acting Branch Chief

FROM: Dana Riddle-Co Chair *DR*
Board of Certification of Operating Personnel In Wastewater Treatment Plants

SUBJECT: Boards of Certification 23rd Annual ABC Conference in Jacksonville, Florida
January 26-29, 2010

Dana Riddle represented the Hawaii Board of Certification of Operating Personnel in Wastewater treatment Plants (BOC) at the annual Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) conference in Jacksonville, Florida from January 26 to January 30, 2010.

The conference was attended by over 100 individuals representing municipal, industrial, military, and tribal concerns. The attendees traveled from geographically dispersed locations including the US mainland, Canada, Jordan, Guam, Saipan, Saint Lucia, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat, the Navajo Nation, and of course Hawaii.

Although not a requirement, I attended a portion of the ABC Task Force steering committees on Tuesday, January 27. I gained much insight on the internal and political structuring of the ABC Boards as well as establishing personal contacts. Several attendees included luminaries in the water/wastewater training and testing fields, including Bill Siedel and Ken Kerri.

The presentations covered a wide range of topics, including many case studies and lessons learned. These presentations were of particular interest:

Loss of Qualified Operating Personnel

Several speakers discussed the challenges of recruiting younger qualified workers to fill the projected shortage of workers as baby-boomers retire over the course of the next few years. California and Nevada are experiencing severe difficulties. Solutions include aggressive involvement of managements working with local school boards and the encouragement of participation in local job and science fairs. Some states (South Carolina and Georgia) are experimenting with allowing accredited programs presented by technical schools to count as experience.

Budgetary Challenges

Many states are facing loss of funding and are working to reduce overhead. The 'Dixie cup' concept is popular in many large or isolated areas (Texas and the Caribbean islands). This protocol can be described as one where a paper cup is placed upon an area map and the

designated area becomes semi-autonomous, and multiple clusters of *local* training areas are established.

Some Boards have reduced operating costs by thousands of dollars annually by switching to post cards for general snail mail correspondence.

Online records, in isolated cases, have reduced the number of support staff or have reduced their work burden.

Online testing has been implemented since the last conference by several states through ABC and AMP. The reported responses by operators have been very positive (after an initial reluctance to use computers for taking the test).

Some states no longer maintain training records for individual operators. It is felt that the license(s) are the personal property of the individual and therefore is the responsibility of that person to maintain.

One state (Georgia) allows for online license renewal, while another (North Carolina) also accepts PayPal.

Many states post PDF documents online for review by the BOC before their meetings, and a pass-word protected blog is available for general questions to be discussed beforehand (Note that decisions are *not* made on the BOC blogs). Georgia, for instance, has 10,000 water/wastewater licenses issued, yet they meet for 3 hours every other month.

Other Items of Interest

Florida reports problems with job applicants presenting bogus high school diplomas from online 'diploma mills'. Transcripts and diplomas appear legitimate but are actually purchased for as little as \$99 in only a few minutes' time. Worse, these transcripts are accepted by many colleges nationwide. The impact of these 'diplomas' on recruitment of wastewater collection system operators was discussed.

In the same vein, a wastewater collection system course presented for CEUs by California State University/Ken Kerri can be accepted in lieu of a high school diploma.

Two presentations discussed the impacts of treated wastewater on downstream potable water treatment plants. Lateral mixing in rivers was examined, and the tragic effects of potable water wells under the influence of polluted surface water were also presented.

In Closing

Overall, attending the conference was worthwhile and informative. Attendees presented a diverse spectrum of viewpoints and protocols, all in the interest of advancing professionalism and capabilities of wastewater treatment plant operators. I feel it is in the best interest of the Board of Certification, the State, and the people of Hawaii for a representative to attend future ABC conferences.