

# Iowa Joint Operator Certification and Training Coordination Committee

Friday, November 19, 2004 – IAMU Office, Ankeny, Iowa

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## Meeting Minutes

### 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Larry Trout at 10:00 a.m.

*Present were:*

• Dale Acheson	• Steve Mrstik
• Alan Borden	• Karen Nachtman
• Eric Halligan	• Harris Seidel
• Marty Hoffert	• Laurie Sharp
• Steve Hopkins	• Jill Soenen
• Rhonda Guy	• Jim Stricker
• Steve Jones	• Larry Trout
• Jon Martens	• Jim Utter
• Jim McElvogue	• Mike Wildung

Visitors: Linda Kinman  
Steve Moehlmann  
Mark Simms

### 2. Approval of September 17, 2004 Minutes

Moved by Jim Stricker, seconded by Marty Hoffert, to approve the minutes as distributed. Motion carried.

### 3. Change in Agenda

Marty Hoffert asked that the item of New Business regarding the request by the Iowa Association of Water Agencies (IAWA) for full membership on the Joint Committee be tabled until the January 2005 meeting. Iowa Section AWWA's Board has not had opportunity to discuss this request and will meet on December 15. Moved to table by Marty Hoffert; seconded by Jim McElvogue; motion carried.

### 4. Public Comment Period

Steve Moehlmann reported that ACEOPS was presenting a number of training events later this year and early next year. Specific information is available on the Web site.

*Steve Jones assumed the Chair at this point.*

### 5. Unfinished Business/Assignments

#### a. Bylaws Amendment.

Forms were distributed for a written ballot on the question: Shall Article II, Section 7, of the Joint Committee Bylaws be amended by striking the two words "or individuals" as shown below?

"The addition of state organizations and agencies ~~or individuals~~ will require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the member organizations of the Joint Committee. Members may vote by proxy. Proxy authorization shall be confirmed in writing."

The results of the written ballot were as follows:

IAMU – Yes	ISU - Yes
IAWWA – Yes	IWPCA - Yes
IRWA – Yes	KCC – Yes

Having received more than the required two-thirds favorable vote, the amendment was declared to have passed.

**b. Kirkwood Representatives to the Joint Committee**

The Kirkwood Community College representatives will continue to be Doug Feil, Larry Trout, Steve Mrstik, and Cynthia Root.

**c. IWPCA Representatives to the Joint Committee**

The IWPCA representatives will continue to be Jim McElvogue, Jim Stricker, Jim Utter, and Harris Seidel.

**d. Grade IV Education Requirements and Opportunities**

Steve Jones opened this discussion by distributing a flow chart entitled A Systematic Approach to Operator Training and a listing of proposed Advanced Courses for Grade III/Grade IV Certification. The listing focuses on advanced courses in addition to training currently available for WT and WWT operators. Marty Hoffert commented that a similar list is needed for Water Distribution operators as well. Even though there are not many Grade IV WD systems, there are now a fairly high number of operators with Grade III/IV WD certificates who received them during the step-up transition of several years ago.

Larry Trout then distributed KCC curriculum sheets marked up to show proposed one-year programs in water and wastewater courses which are now available on-line. These are shown as semester hours, but the normal conversion is one semester hour = 1.5 CEUs. Therefore, accumulating 30 semester hours would be considered equivalent to 45 CEUs, equivalent to one year of post-high school training. The current cost is \$89 per semester hour which is clearly a consideration but may still be attractive when all costs (time, travel, fees, etc.) for other training modes are factored in.

Would these courses, as proposed by either Steve or Larry, receive extra credit through this plan? No. We are not going back to 2X for anything, regardless of course level. There will be no special track with a bonus at the finish line.

Discussion then turned to the Rules change proposal brought to the Joint Committee by the Grade IV Education Subcommittee (Hoffert, McElvogue, Mrstik) in September.

"Two years of direct responsible charge experience in a Grade III or higher position may be substituted for one year of directly related post-high school education for Grade IV certification up to three-quarters of the post-high school education requirement."

The following table is repeated from the September 2004 minutes.

<u>Current Requirements</u>	<u>Post-High School Education, years</u>	<u>Operating Experience, years</u>
Grade IV certification	4	4 (incl. 2 DRC)
*May substitute 1 year of operating experience for 1 year of education to	3	5 (incl. 2 DRC)
*May substitute 2 years of operating experience for 2 years of education to	2	6 (incl. 2 DRC)

(This is the current limit of substitution.)

The two-year post-high school requirement just above can be met by

- two years of college, or
- one year of college plus 45 CEUs, or
- 90 CEUs.

<u>Subcommittee Proposal</u>	<u>Post-High School Education, years</u>	<u>Operating Experience, years</u>
**May substitute two more years of <b>DRC</b> experience for one year of education	1	8 (incl. 4 DRC)

The one-year post-high school requirement just above can be met by

- one year of college or
- 45 CEUs.

Can these two proposals go forward together? Yes. An operator can pursue either or both. Even after gaining two more years of DRC experience, the operator will still need the one year of education shown above which translates as 30 semester hours, or 45 CEUs. Will this proposed new substitution be "divisible"? That is, would one more year of DRC experience be accepted as a substitution for one-half year of post-high school education?

Will this proposed substitution of DRC experience for education require a Rules change? Yes. IDNR staff will be bringing a package of two or three proposed Rules changes to the Joint Committee in January. (More on this under IDNR comments later.) The Joint Committee has no authority in regard to Rules changes, but the IDNR desires a vote by the Joint Committee to demonstrate support of this change. If representatives of the member agencies feel they need direction from their governing boards before voting, they are requested to obtain that direction and be ready to vote in January.

**e. Annual Operator Certification Report**

Laurie Sharp promised on a stack of old applications to e-mail the latest annual report to Joint Committee members SOON.

**f. Bar Code Scanner for Session Attendance Monitoring**

Jon Martens presented cost and application information from two companies that provide this equipment. One company leases the scanners for \$300 each per event. The other company provides scanners for \$249 each and licenses its software for up to five laptops for \$400. A laptop is needed in each room.

Some organizations issue encoded cards similar to those now used by most hotels/motels, which can be "swiped" through a reader to record movement into and out of a session. The IDNR is actively considering replacing operator certificates with a wallet card. It might be possible to encode information on that card which would enable it to be used for attendance monitoring. In the words of Jim Utter, "More input is needed."

**g. Grant from the IDNR for Updated Five-Year Strategic Plan**

Jon Martens has prepared the proposal, and it is in IDNR's hands. Certification staff had hoped to award the grant to a member(s) of the Joint Committee as a sole-source provider, but the IDNR has recently halted all sole-source contracts. An RFP procedure may be necessary unless this procedural block can be solved.

**h. Nominating Committee Report and Election of 2005 Officers**

Karen Nachtman, Chair of the Nominating Committee, reported the following slate of candidates.

Chair: Jon Martens  
Vice Chair: Jim McElvogue  
Secretary: Harris Seidel

Moved by Jim Utter, seconded by Dale Acheson, that nominations cease and a vote be conducted on the above slate to serve as officers of the Joint Committee beginning in January 2005. The vote by member agencies was as follows:

IAMU – Yes                      ISU - Yes  
IAWWA – Yes                    IWPCA - Yes  
IRWA – Yes                      KCC – Yes

The new officers were declared duly elected. On behalf of the Joint Committee, Karen expressed appreciation to the retiring officers for their work during the past year.

**6. New Business**

The vote on full membership for the IAWA had been tabled until the January 21, 2005 meeting. Members were reminded to come prepared to vote then on IAWA's application. The Chair invited those who had questions to address them to Linda Kinman who was present on behalf of the IAWA. In response to questions, Linda stated that the IAWA currently had 25 members, including public and private water utilities and RWAs, all serving over 10,000 people. The IAWA may wish to become an Issuing Agency in the future. The IAWA recognizes that neither being an Issuing Agency nor being a member of the Joint Committee depend on or have any effect on the other.

**7. Representative Comments**

**a. IDNR**

Steve Hopkins stated that his Section had just received approval to hire an Information Technologist (IT) for one year to upgrade the OpCert database and other databases, something which is badly needed. Also, Russell Tell started work today with the well drillers' program. His previous experience was with his own well company in Dayton and the Story County Health Department.

**b. IDNR – Additional Rules Change – Fees**

Laurie Sharp described two problems which are impacting the financial health of the OpCert program. First, ABC is raising its exam fees. Second, Iowa has only one fee, now \$30, for taking the exam. Many other states charge one fee for processing the application, then a second fee for actually taking the exam. Laurie receives several requests a day from operators wanting to know what level of exam they are eligible for. This can be very time-consuming and brings in no revenue.

The IDNR is considering a new fee of \$20-25 as an application fee. Opinions of the Joint Committee members were generally that it might be more acceptable to go with a single higher exam fee (perhaps \$40?) rather than a combination of two fees. Would a higher exam fee of \$40 raise as much money? Laurie was asked to estimate the revenue potential of several alternatives and report back to the Joint Committee.

The bottom line is that the OpCert program is required to be self-supporting, and it needs more revenue from somewhere to remain so. If the Joint Committee is to have any input on this issue, it must be at the January 2005 meeting to meet IDNR's schedule for its Rules change package.

**c. IDNR – Additional Rules Change – CEU Reporting Procedure**

Under the Issuing Agency Agreement, the Issuing Agency commits to adopting an electronic format and timely reporting of CEU credit in a manner acceptable to the IDNR. To date, only Kirkwood, NIACC, and Indian Hills CC are doing so. The University of Iowa refuses to send anything electronically.

Other community colleges are, by definition, accredited to issue CEUs but need not enter into IAAs with the IDNR, specific to OpCert. What can be done to bring them into the program and have them submit training data in the desired electronic format? Failure to do so simply means that the IDNR staff must spend many hours doing this job. Can these providers be charged an additional fee? No. Can they be required to comply? Can the IDNR reject CEU reports from training classes or courses which are not submitted electronically? In charging the operators a CEU fee, have training providers also assumed the obligation of complying with reporting requirements? The IDNR may also bring a Rules change proposal on this issue to the January 2005 meeting.

**d. IAMU**

Karen Nachtman announced that Safety Coordinators' Workshops will be held at the IAMU on January 27, 28. The IAMU's annual W/WW Workshop is scheduled for February 16-18 at the University Park in West Des Moines.

**e. IAMU – Limit on CEU Credit for Safety Training**

Karen Nachtman presented IAMU's position opposing the 20 percent limit on Safety training for certification renewal included as a statement of policy in the October 2004 renewal update letter; since this is not in the Rules, it cannot be enforced. This policy is stated in our Guidelines, not in the Rules. However, the current Rules include the statement that "The director will determine which courses qualify as directly related." and that gives the IDNR all the authority needed to implement this policy.

Why 20 percent? Why not 30 percent or 50 percent? Could we not allow 50 percent for a two-year trial period before this goes to the EPA? There were no comments favoring IAMU's position. Some states have put in place a limit as Iowa has done; others do not allow any CEU credit for Safety training. To quote the October 2004 renewal letter, "The state recognizes the extreme importance of safety. . . ." However, the main goal is best expressed in this statement authored by Joe Zerfas for the introduction to the Approved CEU Course Guidance Lists: "The IDNR expects all operators to take balanced CEU training that is directly related to improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities, including training on new or innovative technology." Let's keep in mind RETAIN and GAIN.

**f. IAWWA**

Jon Martens reported that in place of the usual program topics, all AWWA regional meetings in the spring of 2005 will be Water Security Workshops presented by the IDNR.

**g. IRWA**

No comments.

**h. ISU**

No comments.

**i. IWPCA**

Jim Stricker announced that the Collection Systems Specialty Conference (a.k.a. the Marshalltown conference) will be held on March 3, 4. The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Biosolids Specialty Conference is scheduled for March 16 at DMACC. The Region V Wastewater Regional Meeting is scheduled for March 30 in Centerville.

**j. KCC**

Larry Trout reported that he and Steve Mrstik will be teaching the w/ww BTC courses simultaneously at Simpson College's West Des Moines Campus on November 22, 23 and November 30, December 1.

**8. Assignments**

Laurie Sharp/Joe Zerfas – Distribute copies of next generation latest annual operator certification report  
IDNR staff – Prepare language (at least in concept) for the Rules changes anticipated. AND  
IDNR staff – Provide this to the Joint Committee in time for consideration by members' governing boards so they, in turn, can give voting instructions for the January 21, 2005 meeting.

Jon Martens – Follow status of grant for Strategic Plan update

Marty Hoffert – Obtain instructions from the IAWWA Executive Board regarding vote on full membership for the IAWA at the January 21, 2005 meeting.

**9. Next Meeting**

Friday, January 21, 2005, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the IAMU office in Ankeny.

**10. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn was made by Steve Mrstik; seconded by Jim McElvogue; motion carried. The Joint Committee adjourned at 1:28 p.m.

Harris F. Seidel, Secretary