

Continuing Education Guidance

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I. Introduction

Continuing education contact hours are required for the renewal of all drinking water treatment and distribution certificates in California. The required number of hours increases with the level of certification and is listed in Table 63840-A below. Continuing education contact hours must be obtained between renewal periods and prior to the submittal of the renewal application. Because the renewal is due 120 days, (four months), prior to the certificate expiration date, it is necessary to complete the contact hours at least four months prior to the expiration of the certificate in order to avoid late fees.

Some courses are not measured in “contact hours” but in college units or CEU’s, (Continuing Education Units). The number of contact hours per unit can vary among colleges and training providers but generally the following conversions will apply.

- 1 CEU = 10 contact hours
- 3 quarter units = 30 contact hours
- 3 semester units = 45 contact hours.

II. Contact Hour Requirements

Table 63840-A. Required Continuing Education Contact Hours for Certificate Renewal

<i>Water Treatment Operators</i>	<i>Contact Hours Required</i>
Grade T1	12
Grade T2	16
Grade T3	24
Grade T4	36
Grade T5	36
<i>Distribution Operators</i>	
Grade D1	12
Grade D2	16
Grade D3	24
Grade D4	36
Grade D5	36

III. Qualifying a Course for Contact Hours

There are four basic requirements that all continuing education contact hours must meet.

1. The course, class, seminar, or presentation should be at least one hour long.

The regulations define one contact hour as “not less than 50 minutes of specialized training or a continuing education course”. This allows for a 10-minute break each hour. Shorter presentations cannot be added together to equal one hour of contact time. Continuing education providers are responsible for evaluating their presentations and issuing contact hours accordingly.

2. The subject matter must be specific to water treatment or distribution.

A course that presents information on a general subject that is not specific to the water industry would not be acceptable as continuing education. A course that addresses that subject as it applies to the drinking water industry would be acceptable.

- A course that presents information on “maintenance” is not specific to water treatment or distribution and would not be acceptable for continuing education. If the course was more specific such as “pump maintenance” or “pipe maintenance” it would be acceptable because the subject matter is specific to the kind of maintenance an operator might do on the job.
- Management seminars or classes that teach general supervision or management skills is too general but a course that is specific such as “Water Utility Management” would be acceptable. This class would address management as it applies to operating a water utility.
- Courses on software or computer training can be acceptable if it is specific to water treatment or distribution. For example, a course on a word processing program would be too general but a course on a SCADA software program would be acceptable.
- A college math course is too general but a course on “water math” that is specific to the math skills required to operate a water treatment facility or distribution system is acceptable.

3. The course, class, seminar or presentation must be taken within the current renewal period.

The purpose of continuing education is to expand the operators’ knowledge on an ongoing basis. Courses that were completed in the past cannot be used to fulfill the continuing education requirement. The renewal period is considered to be the time between the previous renewal and the next renewal. For example, if an operator renews a certificate in June of 2001 for a certificate that expires in October 2001 the renewal period would be from June 2001 to June 2004. Contact hours taken before June 2001 would not count. Courses taken after the operator renews in June 2004 would count for the next renewal in June 2007. If the operator does not renew the certificate until August 2004 then the renewal period

would be from June 2001 to August 2004. This would give the operator more time to accumulate contact hours but the operator would have to pay the late fee associated with late renewal. An operator must meet the continuing education requirements by the renewal date in order to avoid late fees.

4. The course, class, seminar or presentation must be verifiable. The operator must supply the required information so the continuing education contact hours can be verified.

In order to receive credit for a continuing education contact hour the operator must provide the following information to allow the Operator Certification unit to verify the course.

- Title – A descriptive title of the seminar or course so the subject matter can be reviewed.
- Instructor – The individual, organization, or event that provided the continuing education contact hours.
- Contact and phone number of continuing education provider - This information is required so that attendance and subject matter can be verified. The contact should be able to verify attendance with a sign-in/sign-out sheet, verify subject matter covered, and contact hours earned. The contact person can be the actual instructor or an individual designated by the continuing education provider to retain this information.
- Location.
- Date – The date(s) the contact hours were earned.
- Number of contact hours issued by the continuing education provider.

The continuing education provider should keep the following records available for five years in order to ensure a course, class, seminar or presentation can be verified.

- Title and course description of the information presented. This can be in the form of a course syllabus, handouts given by the presenter, or written descriptions of the course by the contact hour provider or speaker.
- List of individuals who attended the presentation. This can be a class roster, sign-in/sign-out sheet, or course transcript.
- Number of contact hours offered.
- Date – The date(s) the contact hours were earned.

IV. Acceptable Subject Matter

The subject matter must be related to the operation or maintenance of a water treatment facility or distribution system. This would include but is not limited to the following subjects.

- Drinking water regulations. Seminars or courses designed to educate operators on current or upcoming regulations that pertain to drinking water.
- The use or maintenance of equipment utilized in the drinking water industry such as pumps, filters, pipes, meters, and storage tanks. This would also include courses on the maintenance or use of analytical equipment used in a W.T. plant such as chlorine residual analyzers, turbidimeters, and particle counters, and pH meters.
- Processes such as pumping, filtering, flocculation, sedimentation, chemical additions, jar testing, aeration...
- Water math, and water treatment or distribution exam review courses designed to help the operator pass the water treatment or distribution exams.
- Courses on the mixing, measuring and handling of water treatment chemicals, and disinfectants. Courses on chemical analysis are acceptable if the analysis is a common procedure in a water treatment plant or distribution system. Some examples are pH, chlorine residual, alkalinity, and conductivity measurement. Courses on general physical parameters and water sampling are also acceptable.
- Seminars on new water treatment techniques are acceptable. One goal of the continuing education program is to ensure that operators are being educated on new technologies and processes that are being developed in the water industry.
- Up to 25% of the continuing education contact hours can be safety related. It is not necessary that safety topics be specific to the water industry because most general safety topics are relevant in modern water treatment plants. Confined spaces, chemical safety, slip & fall prevention, electrical safety, etc...are some examples. Safety meetings can count if the proper documentation is kept and the meeting is at least 1 hour long.

V. Types of Training

There are several methods of delivering continuing education contact hours. Some are listed below. It is the responsibility of the operator to ensure that the course, class, seminar or presentation is verifiable.

- **In-house training.** A water utility can train employees in-house by contracting an outside instructor or having one of their own employees' present information on a relevant topic. Initial training of new operators is also acceptable if the required documentation is kept on file. When a new instrument or piece of equipment is purchased by a water utility the training required to operate or maintain that piece of equipment can be acceptable for continuing education.
- **Industry meetings.** Attending seminars and workshops or presentations offered by water industry organizations is a way to get continuing education contact hours. Many organizations that hold meetings will invite speakers to make presentations on subjects related to water treatment or distribution. If the organization takes attendance and keeps records of the information presented they can offer contact hours for these presentations.
- **Industry conferences -** Attending seminars, workshops or presentations offered by water industry organizations during their conferences is a way to get continuing education contact hours.
- **Correspondence courses, internet classes and teleconferences.**
- **College courses.** A college level course that meets the subject matter requirements can be used to meet the continuing education requirements. Most college courses are offered in units. The number of contact hours per CEU, (Continuing Education Unit) is usually 10. The number of contact hours per semester or quarter unit can vary among colleges but is usually between 10 and 15. Check with your instructor or your college for specific information.
- **Computer training.** Some courses are available on CD-ROM. If the training provider can verify student participation or attendance and the subject matter requirements are met then classes attended in this way can be acceptable.

VI. Miscellaneous Guidance

1. What should you expect from a Continuing Education provider?

- An accurate and informative presentation that will enhance your knowledge of the water treatment or distribution industry and enable you to improve your job performance.

- A method to verify attendance and contact hours. This can simply be a sign-in/sign-out sheet at the beginning and end of the course that will be kept on file for at least five years.
- A method to deliver the required information to the attendees so they will be able to receive credit for contact hours. This can be as simple as a certificate of completion that contains all the information listed above.

2. Continuing education contact hours used to renew your water treatment certificate can also be used for renewing your distribution certificate.

If you hold both a water treatment certificate and a distribution certificate you can use the same contact hours to renew both certificates as long as those contact hours were taken within both renewal periods.

3. Teaching a course, class, seminar or presentation that is acceptable for continuing education contact hours could count for up to 50% of the instructors' continuing education requirement.

Example - An operator holding a grade 3 certificate teaches a 20 hour course. Since that operator needs 24 contact hours to renew their grade 3 certificate they can claim 12 contact hours, (50% of 24), for teaching the course.

4. Using a Specialized Training course for continuing education.

A Specialized Training course that an operator takes to meet exam requirements can also be used as continuing education as long as it is taken within the renewal period of the certificate.

5. Out of state contact hours.

Contact hours that were obtained outside of California are acceptable for continuing education as long as they meet the subject matter criteria and are verifiable. If the subject matter is "Regulations" the scope must be limited to California or Federal regulations.

6. Safety related contact hours could count for 25% of the continuing education requirement.

Safety meetings that cover a topic related to safety in a water treatment plant or distribution system can be used for continuing education. The meeting must be at least one hour in length. Several shorter meetings cannot be combined to meet the one-hour minimum.

VII. Related Regulation Language and Definitions

Section 63750.40. Continuing Education Course.

“Continuing education course” means a presentation that transmits information related to the operation of a treatment facility and/or distribution system.

Section 63750.35. Contact Hour.

“Contact hour” means not less than 50 minutes of specialized training or a continuing education course.

Section 63840. Certification Renewals.

(3) A list of successfully completed continuing education courses as required by subsection (c). The following information shall be provided for each course:

- (A) title
- (B) name of the instructor,
- (C) location,
- (D) date(s), and
- (E) number of contact hours.

(c) To be eligible for certificate renewal, certified operators possessing certificates that expire after December 31, 2003, shall have completed **continuing education contact hours** since the previous renewal or issuance of the certificate pursuant to Table 63840-A. No more than 25% of the contact hours shall be courses in operator safety.

(1) Operators possessing both distribution and treatment certificates may apply continuing education credits to both certificates.

(2) Specialized training that is used to satisfy the requirements of section 63775 or 63780 may be used to satisfy the continuing education requirements of Table 63840-A if obtained since the previous renewal or issuance of the certificate.