



# Need-to-Know Criteria

## Wastewater Treatment

### Operator Class I

A Need-to-Know Guide when preparing for the:

Wastewater Treatment Operator Class I Certification Exam



The Associated Boards  
of Certification

*Superior Water Starts Here™*

# Before You Dive In...

## What is the Need-to-Know Criteria?

This Wastewater Treatment Operator Class I Need-to-Know Criteria was developed to assist operators in understanding the content that will be covered in the Standardized Wastewater Treatment Operator Class I exam. A methodical and comprehensive international investigation was conducted to determine the most significant job tasks performed by wastewater treatment operators. The content covered on the exam represents the job tasks identified through this research as essential operator competencies, and is not limited to the practices of your system/facility. The following pages organize these job tasks into Content Areas and identify the amount of the test devoted to each area.

## Is this Need-to-Know Criteria relevant to MY exam?

WPI offers a variety of standardized and customized exam services. This document is reflective only of the Standardized Wastewater Treatment Operator Class I exam; older editions of the standardized exam and various customized exams are also administered by various certification programs. Please contact your certifying authority to determine whether they have implemented this exam for your program.

## Pre-Test Questions

Your exam may include up to 10 extra questions that have not been used on previous versions of the exam. These are known as “pre-test” questions and allow WPI to gather valuable data about the new questions before they are included in future tests. Pre-test questions are unidentified and scattered

throughout the exam so you will answer them with the same care in which you address scored questions. The pre-test questions are not included in your final score.

## Exam Preparation Resources

Visit [gowpi.org](http://gowpi.org) to access the Formula/Conversion Table administered with this exam, a list of approved references, information on purchasing study guides available from partner organizations, and more.

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## Exam Content

The Wastewater Treatment Operator Class I exam will test you on essential job tasks. These job tasks have been categorized into the Content Areas detailed in the following pages. The table displayed on Page 4 of this document summarizes the areas that are included on the exam, the number of test questions in each of these areas, and the cognitive format of the test questions, the number of calculation questions in each area.

Just as operator job duties vary in their complexity, so will the questions you are asked on the exam. Some will be simpler, whereas others will be more complex or cognitively demanding. The following two cognitive levels are used to describe the format of the questions you will encounter on this exam:



**Recall** – Tasks at this cognitive level typically require the simple recall or recognition of specific facts, concepts, processes, or procedures, with little to no problem-solving involved. You may be asked to identify, illustrate, recall, and/or recognize specific information. An example of a Recall type item follows:

**Although the required contact time for chlorine to kill bacteria may vary depending on certain water characteristics, the typical industry standard is:**

- A. 15 minutes
- B. 30 minutes**
- C. 45 minutes
- D. 60 minutes




**Application** – Tasks at this level will involve some basic problem-solving, calculations, or the interpretation and application of data. You may be asked to calculate, categorize, classify, compare, differentiate, explain, specify, translate, and/or apply knowledge. An example of an Application type item follows:

**In the activated sludge process, some of the activated sludge MUST be wasted to:**

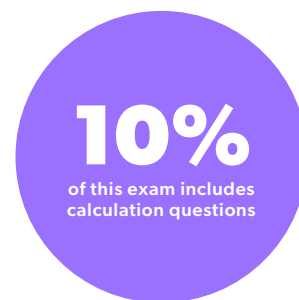
- A. increase digester gas production
- B. prevent excessive solids build-up**
- C. prevent clogging of the sludge return line
- D. prevent overloading of sludge return pumps
















## Exam Content Continued

 **Units for Calculations** – This exam requires numerical calculations. The number of calculation items is detailed in the Exam Content Outline below. WPI’s standardized examinations are designed to be utilized in both the United States and Canada, therefore calculation items are presented in both US Standard units and Metric units. Each item is solvable in both units independently. The US Standard units will appear first in the question followed by the metric units in parentheses. An example of a Calculation item follows:

**If a water reservoir 12 ft (4 m) in diameter has a static water level of 21 ft (7 m) what is the pressure on the bottom of the tank?**

- A. 6 psi (46 kPa)
- B. **9 psi (69 kPa)**
- C. 12 psi (92 kPa)
- D. 21 psi (161 kPa)



NUMBER OF QUESTIONS	CONTENT AREA	COGNITIVE FORMAT OF JOB TASK EXAM CONTENT
<b>39</b>	Equipment Evaluation, Maintenance, and/or Operation	 <b>13</b>  <b>26</b>  <b>00</b>
<b>38</b>	Treatment Process Evaluation and Adjustment	 <b>06</b>  <b>32</b>  <b>09</b>
<b>10</b>	Laboratory Analysis	 <b>04</b>  <b>06</b>  <b>01</b>
<b>13</b>	Security, Safety, and Administrative Procedures	 <b>08</b>  <b>05</b>  <b>00</b>
<b>100</b>	Total	 <b>31</b>  <b>69</b>  <b>10</b>

\* Your exam may contain up to 10 extra unscored pre-test questions (see *Before You Dive In* for more details).

# Wastewater Treatment Operator Class I | *Need-to-Know Criteria*

## Exam References

Each question on the standardized Wastewater Treatment Class I Examination is referenced to widely accepted, peer-reviewed publications from California State University, Office of Water Programs, American Water Works Association, or the Water Environment Federation. A complete listing of references used for the development of this exam can be found on WPI’s website at:

<https://www.gowpi.org/services/abc-testing/exam-references/>

In order to assist with exam preparation, the table below provides both primary and secondary reference materials for each content area on this examination. Please note that exam questions may be referenced to any WPI approved source, however, the following matrix identifies the two most prominent sources in each content area.

NUMBER OF QUESTIONS	CONTENT AREA	PRIMARY REFERENCE	SECONDARY REFERENCE
39	Equipment Operation & Maintenance	CSUS Operation of Wastewater Treatment Plants, Volume 1, 8th Edition	CSUS Operation of Wastewater Treatment Plants, Volume 2, 8th Edition
38	Treatment Process Evaluation and Adjustment	CSUS Operation of Wastewater Treatment Plants, Volume 1, 8th Edition	WEF Wastewater Treatment Fundamentals 1 – Liquid Treatment
10	Laboratory Analysis	CSUS Operation of Wastewater Treatment Plants, Volume 1, 8th Edition	WEF Wastewater Treatment Fundamentals 1 – Liquid Treatment
13	Security, Safety and Administrative Procedures	CSUS Operation of Wastewater Treatment Plants, Volume 2, 8th Edition	CSUS Operation of Wastewater Treatment Plants, Volume 1, 8th Edition



13 Recall

26 Application

0 Calculation Items

## Equipment Evaluation, Maintenance, and/or Operation

### Preliminary treatment equipment

- Screening and grinding
- Bar screens
- Grit removal equipment (e.g., vortex, gravity)
- Flow equalization systems

### Primary treatment equipment

- Clarifiers/sedimentation basins

### Secondary treatment equipment

- Ponds/lagoons
- Aeration basins
- Aeration systems (e.g., blowers, surface aerators, diffusers)
- Attached growth/fixed film equipment (e.g., RBC, trickling filter, bio-tower)

### Tertiary treatment equipment

- Filtration
- Media filtration (e.g., sand, anthracite, disc filter)

### Disinfection equipment

- Chlorination (e.g., chlorine, hypochlorite, chloramine)
- Dechlorination (e.g., sodium bisulfite, sodium thiosulfate, sulfur dioxide)
- Ultra-violet (UV)

### Solids treatment equipment

- Dewatering
- Belt press
- Drying bed
- Digesters
- Aerobic digesters

### Pumps

- Centrifugal
- Positive displacement
- Peristaltic
- Diaphragm

### Mixers

### Chemical dosing equipment

### Electrical and instrumentation equipment

- Motors
- Motor control center
- Field instrumentation (e.g., flowmeters, pressure sensors, level sensors)
- Online analyzers (e.g., DO, pH, ORP, turbidity, chlorine)
- SCADA and telemetry systems

### Auxiliary power

- Generator

### Ancillary equipment

- Air compressors
- Conveyors
- Valves
- Hoists and cranes
- Pipes and fittings



6 Recall



32 Application



9 Calculation Items

### **Preliminary treatment processes (e.g., screening, grinding, grit, flow equalization)**

### **Primary treatment processes**

- Clarification/sedimentation

### **Secondary treatment processes**

- Ponds/lagoons
- Aerobic (aerated)
- Facultative
- Suspended growth processes (activated sludge)
- Complete mix
- Extended aeration
- Nutrient removal processes (e.g., anaerobic/anoxic/aerobic)
- Conventional activated sludge
- Attached growth/fixed film processes
- Trickling filter

### **Tertiary treatment processes**

- Filtration processes
- Media filtration (e.g., sand, anthracite, disc filters)

### **Disinfection treatment processes**

- Chlorination (e.g., chlorine, hypochlorite, chloramine)
- Dechlorination (e.g., sodium bisulfite, sodium thiosulfate, Sulfur dioxide)
- Ultra-violet (UV)

### **Solids treatment processes**

- Aerobic digestion
- Dewatering (e.g., presses, centrifuges, drying beds)

### **Solids disposal**

- Landfill

### **Effluent disposal**

- Surface water discharge
- Rapid infiltration basin (RIB)

### **Chemical dosing**

- Coagulation/flocculation
- Nutrient removal/enhancement
- pH adjustment



4 Recall



6 Application



1 Calculation Item

### Follow laboratory SOPs

#### Collect samples for

- Bacteriological analyses
- Biological analyses (e.g., BOD, CBOD, WET)
- Chemical analyses (e.g., COD, nutrients, metals)
- Physical analyses (e.g., pH, temperature, DO, settleable solids)

#### Conduct

- Bacteriological analyses
- Biological analyses (e.g., BOD, CBOD)
- Chemical analyses (e.g., COD, nutrients, metals)
- Physical analyses (e.g., pH, temperature, DO, settleable solids)
- Process control laboratory testing
- Required regulatory laboratory testing

#### Interpret data from

- Bacteriological analyses
- Biological analyses (e.g., BOD, CBOD, WET)
- Chemical analyses (e.g., COD, nutrients, metals)
- Physical analyses (e.g., pH, temperature, DO, settleable solids)

#### Operate and maintain laboratory instrumentation (e.g., DO, pH, H<sub>2</sub>S, ORP)



8 Recall



5 Application



0 Calculation Items

## Security, Safety, and Administrative Procedures

### Adhere to safety procedures

#### Establish and/or update safety procedures

- Lockout/tagout
- Confined space
- Hazard communication
- Fall protection
- Spill response
- Chemical handling
- Emergency response
- Vulnerability assessments

#### Maintain safety equipment (e.g., gas detectors, eye-washes, safety showers, respirators)

#### Assist in the selection of equipment for use in wastewater processing

#### Complete operation and maintenance reports (e.g., daily, monthly, annual)

#### Complete required regulatory reports

#### Conduct routine security checks

#### Ensure compliance with all applicable regulations

#### Respond to customer service requests and complaints

#### Adhere to SOPs

#### Establish and/or update SOPs

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*Superior Water Starts Here™*

9400 Plum Drive, Suite 160  
Urbandale, IA 50322  
+1 (515) 232-3623

[gowpi.org](http://gowpi.org)  
[ProfessionalOperator.org](http://ProfessionalOperator.org)  
[wpi@gowpi.org](mailto:wpi@gowpi.org)  
[Info@ProfessionalOperator.org](mailto:Info@ProfessionalOperator.org)