



# Need-to-Know Criteria

## Water Distribution

### Operator Class III

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

Water Distribution Operator Class III Certification Exam



The Associated Boards  
of Certification

*Superior Water Starts Here™*

# Before You Dive In...

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

This Water Distribution Operator Class III Need-to-Know Criteria was developed to assist operators in understanding the content that will be covered in the Standardized Water Distribution Operator Class III exam. A methodical and comprehensive international investigation was conducted to determine the most significant job tasks performed by water distribution 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 Water Distribution Operator Class III 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 Water Distribution Operator Class III 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, the cognitive format of the test questions, and 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

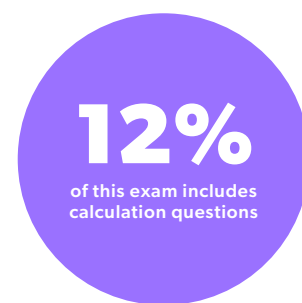
# Water Distribution Operator Class III | Need-to-Know Criteria
















## 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>23</b>	Distribution System Components	 <b>04</b>  <b>19</b>  <b>04</b>
<b>25</b>	Equipment Installation, Operation, Maintenance, and Repair	 <b>11</b>  <b>14</b>  <b>03</b>
<b>25</b>	Water Quality Monitoring, Evaluation, Adjustment, and Laboratory Analysis/Interpretation	 <b>11</b>  <b>14</b>  <b>04</b>
<b>27</b>	Security, Safety, Administrative Procedures, and Public Interactions	 <b>07</b>  <b>20</b>  <b>01</b>
<b>100</b>	Total	 <b>07</b>  <b>20</b>  <b>12</b>

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

# Water Distribution Operator Class III | *Need-to-Know Criteria*

## Exam References

Each question on the standardized Water Distribution Class III 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
23	Distribution System Components	CSUS Water Distribution System Operation & Maintenance 7th Edition	AWWA WSO Water Distribution Grade 1-2
25	Equipment Installation, Operation, Maintenance, and Repair	CSUS Water Distribution System Operation & Maintenance 7th Edition	AWWA WSO Water Distribution Grade 1-2
25	Water Quality Monitoring, Evaluation, Adjustment, and Laboratory Analysis/Interpretation	CSUS Water Distribution System Operation & Maintenance 7th Edition	AWWA WSO Water Distribution Grade 3-4
27	Security, Safety, Administrative Procedures, and Public Interactions	AWWA WSO Water Distribution Grade 3-4	CSUS Water Distribution System Operation & Maintenance 7th Edition



4 Recall



19 Application



4 Calculation Items

## Distribution System Components

### Aid in the design of water distribution projects

#### Assess water production (e.g., water restrictions and demand)

#### Adjust the water production to meet the demand (e.g., start pumps, adjust flow valves, etc.)

#### Understand backflow prevention and control devices

#### Understand SCADA systems components

#### Monitor water distribution system parameters (e.g., pressure, flow, water quality, water age, velocity, storage levels, etc.)

#### Determine water volume (e.g., tank, main, etc.)

#### Determine water flow rate (e.g., mains, pumps, services, etc.)

#### Understand flow characteristics (e.g., diameter, C-factor, head loss, linings, fittings, flow rate, etc.)

#### Maintain an up-to-date map of the distribution system (e.g., GIS, repairs, replacements, etc.)

#### Identify and understand distribution system components

- Pumps and related equipment (e.g., packing pumps, starters, and controls)

- Mains and related equipment (e.g., hydrants and valves, pressure regulating valves, air relief valves, etc.)
- Metering and related equipment (e.g., remote readers, meter replacements, etc.)
- Finished water storage and related equipment (e.g., tanks, overflow pipe, vents, access hatches, etc.)

#### Understand schematic diagrams

#### Understand wells and related equipment (e.g., measure static water levels and pumping water levels, etc.)

#### Perform operational analysis (e.g., analyze operational data, meet performance objectives, document operating conditions, etc.)



11 Recall



14 Application



3 Calculation Items

## Equipment Installation, Operation, Maintenance, and Repair

### Install water lines

- Service lines (e.g., tapping, curb stops, corporation stops, etc.)
- Water mains (e.g., valves, hydrants, thrust restraint, etc.)

### Inspect new construction

### Maintain pump stations and related equipment (e.g., check valves, control systems, etc.)

### Monitor pump stations and related equipment (e.g., records, online monitoring equipment, etc.)

### Clean and disinfect the finished water storage facilities

### Inspect finished water storage facilities (e.g., observe discrepancies, drains, screens, corrosion control, structural issues, etc.)

### Conduct distribution system flushing

### Conduct meter reading

### Maintain and repair distribution components (e.g., mains, services, meters, valves, hydrants, pumps, storage, etc.)

### Disinfect components used during install/repairs

### Perform underground locating, marking, and notification

### Maintain well and related equipment

### Maintain the sanitary condition of the well



11 Recall



14 Application



4 Calculation Items

## Water Quality Monitoring, Evaluation, Adjustment, and Laboratory Analysis/Interpretation

### Adjust the chemical dosage

### Perform routine maintenance on the chemical feed equipment

### Transport, store, and feed chemicals (e.g., chain chlorine cylinders, storage of chemicals, lock the disinfection facility, etc.)

### Maintain an adequate supply of chemicals

### Monitor the chemical feed equipment

### Collect regulatory and informational water samples

### Perform analyses

- Chlorine residual
- pH
- Temperature

### Interpret laboratory analysis

- Chlorine residual
- Chlorine demand
- Microbiological
- pH
- Temperature
- Compliance with established water quality standards
- Meeting standard operating practices



7 Recall



20 Application



1 Calculation Item

## Security, Safety, Administrative Procedures, and Public Interactions

**Follow safety practices (e.g., traffic control, confined spaces, hazmat, lockout/tagout, excavation, etc.)**

**Identify opportunities to mitigate risks (e.g., vulnerability assessments, etc.)**

**Secure facilities to protect public safety and the water supply**

**Investigate system tampering**

**Maintain an emergency plan of operations**

**Maintain system records (e.g., laboratory, consumption, maintenance, repairs, etc.)**

**Interpret plans, maps, and system standard specifications**

**Participate in the budget process**

**Address customer public inquiry (e.g., pressure, billing, water quality, etc.)**

**Inform customers of planned repairs or service disruptions**

**Understand elements of an asset management program**

**Implement a cross-connection control program**

**Develop and implement system operating plans (e.g., routine, emergency response, temporary construction, etc.)**

**Develop and review SOPs**

**Implement a water loss control program**

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