



November, 2012

# What's New At CEU Plan

Volume 1, Number 7

Florida's Operator Certification Program  
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## Florida's Operator Certification Program



Ron McCulley

The screenshot shows the FDEP website with a navigation menu at the top including 'DEP Home', 'About DEP', 'Programs', 'Contact', and 'Site Map'. The main content area is titled 'Water Facilities Funding' and 'Highlights'. The 'Highlights' section features a 'Operator Certification On-line Business Center' with buttons for 'Renew My License On-line', 'Print My Renewal Form On-line', and 'Apply for My Re-Exam On-line'. A 'Special Information\*' box contains text about the licensure renewal window and continuing education requirements.

CEU Plan spoke with Ron McCulley, Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) Program Administrator about their [Operator Certification Program](#).

Ron first became affiliated with the OCP when the program was still under the control of the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation in 1993. He coordinated the examination scheduling, grade mailings and post-examination reviews for OCP until the program was transferred back to FDEP in 1997. Then, in 2004, Ron rejoined the OCP and later became the Administrator of the program in 2009. During his tenure as Administrator, Ron has worked hard at keeping the needs of the operator at the forefront of the program's initiatives.

### Making the Licensing Process Easier and Faster for Operators

Florida's certification program has improved by leaps and bounds over the last 7 years, evolving from a paper-based to a computer-based testing system. Not only are Florida's licensure examinations able to be administered at ten local locations, but Florida exams can now be administered anywhere in the nation. Furthermore, candidates now schedule their examination on a date and time convenient to them (Monday-Saturday), with results available immediately upon completion. Previously, the paper-based exams were given only twice per year at six locations and results took weeks to arrive in the mail. Since the inception of computer-based testing, the program has maintained a satisfaction rate of over 99%.

Online license renewal is another streamlined process implemented by the OCP. This capability was met with great success with approximately 50% of all licenses now being renewed via the web. The OCP is also proud of its ability to print and mail licenses within 24 hours of renewal versus the 4-5 weeks of processing required previously. And for those operators who have employers that renew their licenses, their renewal form can also be found online for the operator to print and give to their employer.



The newest initiative launched by the program is the ability for operators to now apply for their re-examination online. Ron said that "Our applicants can now apply for their re-exam online and receive an instant re-approval. Retake applicants can view their most recent exam history and course expiration dates online. Following their re-approval, an email is sent containing the approval letter and a receipt that can be given to employers for reimbursement purposes. This will save our applicants about 4 weeks of waiting time that is typically associated with the standard paper process."

**Select Exams**

OCP Profile Number: 22840  
 Name: JOE PUBLIC  
 Address: 15 NOVEMBER CIRCLE  
 City, State, Zip: ANYWHERE, FL - 32424

Please verify the above OCP Profile information. If this is **not** your profile, click on the **Go Back to Previous Step** button to enter a different number.

If this **is** your profile but any of your information needs to be updated, **you may still continue with selecting and paying for exams**. Select the Help tab for instructions on updating your information.

The checkbox for each exam that is eligible for retake has been preselected. For more information about any unselected exam, click on its checkbox. You may deselect the checkbox for any exam you do not want to retake.

**Note:** If the **Coursework Expiration** line of an exam is in red, this means that **the coursework for this exam will expire within 30 days of today**.

**Note:** After you take an exam, it can take up to 10 business days for the results to display in the Exam Information section below.

Select/Deselect	Exam Information	Fees Due
All		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Drinking Water - Class C</b> Last Exam Date: (Status: Fail) 08/29/2012 Retake Eligible Date: 10/29/2012 Coursework Expire Date: 01/29/2016 <b>Total Retake Fees:</b>	\$100.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Wastewater - Class C</b> Last Exam Date: (Status: Fail) 08/15/2012 Retake Eligible Date: 10/15/2012 Coursework Expire Date: 06/28/2014 <b>Total Retake Fees:</b>	\$100.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Distribution Systems - Level 3</b> Last Exam Date: (Status: Absent) 07/21/2012 Retake Eligible Date: 07/22/2012 Coursework Expire Date: 08/29/2015 <b>Total Retake Fees:</b>	\$75.00
<b>Total Fees Due :</b>		<b>\$275.00</b>
<b>Total Records : 3</b>		

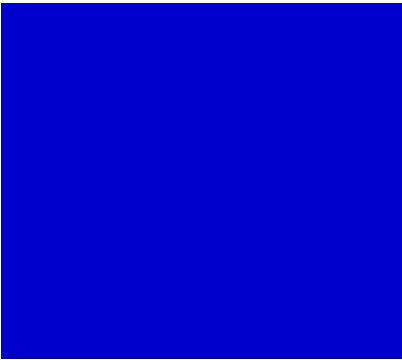
In addition to the modernization of the program, another one of Ron's goals was to increase the amount of training that is available to new applicants and existing operators. Since 2007, Ron has worked closely with training providers and the number of approved water and wastewater training courses has tripled from 21 to 63 courses for operators to choose from.

Also, all of the Operator Certification Handbooks, rules and statutes, and important publications are on the website. There is also a link to Frequently Asked Questions, a license search, and a new "Hours Calculator" for operators to determine if required time of on-the-job experience has been met.

### Challenges for Florida's OCP

One challenge FDEP has already met was the new state requirement for licensing distribution system operators. While the license requirement did not take effect until May 2011, FDEP started the process of adding the new examinations in 2007. A total of 3,893 distribution operators have been licensed through the program.

Although budgets are always tight, and funding limits some of the endeavors the staff would like to pursue, Ron is proud of the fact that FDEP's Operator Certification Program is 100% self-sustaining. Exam, license and renewal fees cover all costs to administer and operate the program and have remained unchanged since they were reduced in 2001. Ron has said that he will continue to work at keeping operating costs low and he sees no need to look for any fee increases.



## **Customer Friendly**

The key objective for Florida's Operator Certification Program is to provide as much personal assistance to its operators as possible. Ron and his staff are always ready and willing to take the time to listen to operators and try to work through issues.

## **What the Future Holds**

Future plans for FDEP's program include continuing to get as much information and certification activity online at the operators' fingertips as possible.

The Florida OCP is a great example of a successful operator certification program.

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