



## **Commonly Asked Questions for Contact Hours and Certification Renewal Applications**

- 1. I noticed the Montana State University Courses are no longer on the list of approved water and wastewater courses. Can I still complete some/all of these courses and use them on my Renewal?**

No. As of January 1, 2014, Ohio EPA will no longer accept Montana State University CD-ROM or Online courses for contact hour credit for use on any certification renewal. Advances in technology and the variation of software on Personal Computers (PCs) are causing issues for many operators attempting to complete these courses and print logbooks or certificates. These courses are more than 10 years old and Montana State University is no longer offering technical support for these discs or for the online versions of these courses.

This includes, but is not limited to, the following list of courses: Operator Basics Training Series 2003, Operator Basics Training Series 2005 (including Surface and Ground Water Systems, Ground Water Systems, and Wastewater Lagoons), Developing a Drinking Water Source Protection Plan, Microbial Risk Assessment Tool, Small Utility Board Training, and Contamination Explorer.

If you have a late 2013 Operator Certification Renewal or a 2014 Operator Certification Renewal, and you have completed your course before January 1, 2014, you may print your logbook or certificate, clearly indicating your completion date, for use on your renewal. Montana State University CD-ROM or Online courses completed after this date will NOT be accepted for contact hours. Operators whom are unable to print logbooks or completion certificates for courses completed prior to this date will not be able to use the course for contact hour credit.

- 2. Is it okay to claim partial credit for a course? (Course "S559804" is approved for 12 contact hours. The course was divided into four, 3-hour segments. I attended one of the 3-hour segments, can I claim 3 contact hours?)**

No, Ohio EPA does not grant partial credit for approved courses. You must attend all nine hours to use that course approval number and any contact hours from the course.

3. **Is it okay to attach the OTCO/AWWA/ORWA/OWEA transcript print-out instead of completing the Completed Contact Hour Course List on the back of the renewal application? I've taken OTCO/AWWA/ORWA/OWEA courses to fulfill my contact hour requirements; can I just attach their form?**

Yes, you can use an OTCO/AWWA/ORWA/OWEA transcript. Just log on to the appropriate organizations contact hour tracking link on their Web site, check the appropriate boxes for the years you have completed course work, and hit compile. You will then be able to print out a form that looks very similar to the OEPA back page. Sign and date the form and attach it to the renewal application. **Please note:** only courses with completed, correct information will be given credit (course approval number, course name, completion date(s) of training, and number of contact hours awarded are required information fields).

4. **How and when will I know if I am being audited?**

The Applications for Operator Certification Renewal are mailed in August of each renewal year. All renewal application forms are pink. The word **AUDIT** will appear in bold at the top of the front and back page of your renewal application, and paragraph #2 states; "You have been randomly selected to be audited." If you are audited, copies of certificates of completion, transcripts, etc. should be mailed with the renewal fee. **Please note:** Carbon copies of session attendance sheets must include course titles, dates, course approval numbers, and must be signed by an on-site training coordinator for the workshop in order to be used as a proof of attendance. They are unacceptable if illegible.

5. **The renewal application asks us to list the course approval number; how do I find an approval number?**

In order to obtain a course approval number, contact the training provider directly, or check our Web site: <http://epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/opcert.aspx> under the Renewal and Contact Hour Course Information heading. There are separate lists maintained for those courses approved for water contact hours, wastewater contact hours. **Please note:** Courses approved by Approved Contact Hour Training Providers are not listed on our Web site. You must

contact those training providers directly for approval numbers of courses which they have approved.

**6. How do I know if a course is approved for water or wastewater?**

For courses beginning with "OEPA":

"D" prefix is approved for water.

"S" prefix is approved for wastewater.

"B" prefix is approved for both water and wastewater.

"G" prefix is a Post-attendance course approval.

- For all other course approval numbers (beginning with a prefix other than OEPA), contact the training provider directly.

**7. My certificate will expire December 31<sup>st</sup>. I hear I am supposed to have half of my contact hours in "OM" Operations and Maintenance. Is this true? How do I know I am taking the right courses?**

**At least half** of an operator's contact hours must be those courses directly related to operations and maintenance of a facility. More than half, or all "OM" is also acceptable. There is no minimum requirement for "X" contact hours. The approved course list located on our website will display a modified course approval number stating a course's designation as Operations and Maintenance "OM" (OEPA-D265987-OM) or Other "X" (OEPA-D265988-X).

**8. My certificate will expire December 31<sup>st</sup> of this year. I took course B407, LockOut/TagOut last year and again this year. Can I use the course twice for my renewal?**

No, you may not use a course twice on the same renewal form. However, if you have taken a course twice within the same renewal period and you have two different certifications, you may use the course once for each certification.

**9. What if I don't have enough contact hours by my expiration date in December?**

You have a one-year grace period to complete contact hours, however, **your certification is considered expired and you should not be acting as the operator of record.** Renewal applications without

contact hours will not be accepted. A \$20 late penalty applies to ALL renewal applications submitted January 31<sup>st</sup>.

**10. If I take a class and it's approved for eight hours for both water and wastewater, can I put eight hours towards my water certificate and eight hours towards my wastewater certificate?**

No, the class counts for eight hours, not sixteen hours. However, you can split the eight total hours between certificates. In order to do this you must indicate this on the completed contact hour course list form on the back of your renewal application.

**11. How many contact hours do I need?**

<b>Water and Wastewater Certificate Level</b>	<b>Contact Hours Required for Renewal</b>
Limited Class A Class A	8
Class I ALL Distribution Certificates ALL Collection Certificates	12
Class II Class III Class IV	24

**Please note:** Operators who hold more than one active certificate shall have the number of contact hours required for the renewal of each certificate reduced by 25%. All 8 hour requirements will be reduced to 6 hours, all 12 hour requirements will be reduced to 9 hours, and all 24 hour requirements will be reduced to 18 hours.

**12. How do I know how many contact hours I have completed? Who has a record of this information?**

Ohio EPA does not maintain earned contact hour records for individual operators. It is the responsibility of the certified operator to maintain all course attendance materials and earned contact hour records. Training providers are required to maintain attendance records for all of their training events for a period of three years from the date of training. If you need a copy of completion certificates or other attendance verification, contact the training provider directly.

- 13. If I have a Class II Water Supply certificate that I am supposed to renew in December 2014 and I pass the Class III exam in November 2014, can I use the contact hours I earned before I passed the exam to renew my Class III renewal in 2016?**

No. Contact hours earned for previous certificates may not be credited towards future certificates. Only contact hours earned during the year of expiration and one-year prior, will count.

- For 2014 renewals, only courses taken in 2013 and 2014 will count; contact hours taken in 2012 will not count.
- For 2015 renewals, only courses taken in 2014 and 2015 will count; contact hours taken in 2013 will not count.
- For 2016 renewals, only courses taken in 2015 and 2016 will count; contact hours taken in 2014 will not count.

Contact hours will only be credited toward the certificate(s) held at the time of course completion.

- 14. How many contact hours are given for 1.0 Continuing Education Unit (CEU) of credit? Are all CEU approved courses approved for contact hours too?**

One CEU credit *may equal a maximum* of ten contact hours. CEU courses are *not always approved* for contact hours. Training providers must submit them for approval. Contact the training provider before attending courses in question to be sure they have been approved by Ohio EPA for contact hour credit.

- 15. I am having a hard time getting my contact hours. Is there an easy way for me to get training at home?**

Yes. We post a list of training providers offering correspondence and on-line courses on our Web site at: [http://epa.ohio.gov/Portals/28/documents/opcert/Internet\\_and\\_Correspondence\\_training.pdf](http://epa.ohio.gov/Portals/28/documents/opcert/Internet_and_Correspondence_training.pdf). Some of these providers require a small fee and others are free. Contact the training provider directly for course cost and registration information.

16. **I am an instructor who taught an approved course for a training provider. Can I take that course approval number and go teach this course any place I want? Can I teach it for another training provider?**

No. Course approval numbers are only issued to the training provider that applies for the course. Course approval numbers are NOT issued to any instructor, at all. Approval numbers are not for use by the instructor's employer, unless the instructor's employer is the training provider who applied for course approval. Instructors who wish to give their same course again at a different place, for a different training provider, can only do so if the new training provider has applied for and been approved to use the course. The training provider may or may not receive the same approval number for the course.

17. **I am renewing two certificates this year. Can I write one check for both renewals?**

Yes. You must include **both** Revenue ID numbers on the check in order to receive payment credit for both renewal fees. If you are including any late renewal fees in that check amount, please include a note attached to the check clearly indicating which Revenue ID number(s) the additional fees should go to.

18. **I am submitting two renewals at one time. Can I place both in the same envelope?**

Yes. Please complete each application separately, stapling any necessary attachments to the correct, individual renewal application. Often times, multiple renewals in the same envelope get divided for payment processing, so items that are not stapled to the correct renewal application may become separated. **DO NOT** staple one copy of contact hour documents (i.e. Completion certificates, OTCO transcripts, AUDIT documents, etc.) to only one renewal if the contact hour documents belong to more than one renewal application. **DO NOT** staple two contact hour renewal applications together. Make copies of all necessary documents and staple them to the correct renewal, making sure to clearly indicate which course(s) you intend to use for each separate certificate renewal. Each renewal application should be a stapled, completed application packet. Failure to do this may result in a return of your incomplete renewal application. **NOTE:** AUDIT renewal applications have a different mailing address. If you

are mailing multiple renewals in one envelope with at least one being an AUDIT, please send all items to the AUDIT address.

- 19. I am a current member of a professional Water/Wastewater organization. I heard I can use this membership for 1.0 contact hour on my renewal. Is this true?**

Yes. Current members of a National or Ohio organization such as WEF, AWWA, OAWWA, OWEA, and ORWA may submit a copy of their Personal, Individual Membership card for 1.0 "X" contact hour on their certificate renewal application. Credit **WILL NOT** be given for personal, individual Section Memberships. Credit **WILL NOT** be given for an Employer's membership even if you work for that employer.

- 20. I want to get post-attendance contact hour credit for some courses I have taken that are not yet approved. Is it ok to attach a Contact Hour Course Approval Application to my renewal?**

No. Contact Hour Course Applications are time sensitive and need to be received within 30 days of course completion. Renewals are processed for payment prior to being received in the OpCert Unit and often arrive after the 30 day time frame. If you wish to obtain post-attendance credit for a contact hour course, you must submit the course application separately and timely in order to be reviewed. Please do not submit an incomplete renewal application pending any course approval.

- 21. I took a course from a training provider, but the course did not have an approval number. It is pending review and approval by Ohio EPA for contact hour course credit. Can I submit my renewal with this pending course listed?**

No. You should only submit completed renewal applications. A completed application contains all correct course approval numbers, course names, training provider names, dates of training, number of contact hours, proofs of attendance or other appropriate documentation, payment made to "Treasurer, State of Ohio", your signature and date at the bottom of the renewal application page, and must be received by December 31<sup>st</sup> of your renewal year.

**22. I am the Operator of Record and I renew this year. It is nearing December 31<sup>st</sup> and I do not have a valid renewal card in hand.**

**I have not yet mailed in my renewal:** We must receive your completed certification renewal application by the close of business on December 31<sup>st</sup> of your renewal year. All certificates expire January 1<sup>st</sup>. If you are an Operator of Record we highly suggest that you submit paperwork well in advance of the expiration date. Operators whose renewal applications were not complete by December 31<sup>st</sup> of their renewal year may NOT act as the Operator of Record until they receive their renewal card.

**I have already mailed in my renewal:** All renewal applications are printed with a November 30<sup>th</sup> due date to allow Ohio EPA time to process the 5,000+ applications that arrive each year. In order to fulfill your requirements as the Operator of Record, you should submit your completed renewal application in advance of this date. If you have not submitted a completed renewal application, you will be notified by letter. You must fulfill the request(s) in the Renewal Return Letter in order for your certification to be renewed. Operators whose renewal applications were not complete by December 31<sup>st</sup> of their renewal year may NOT act as the Operator of Record until they receive their renewal card.