

# Wastewater Operator Certification Transition to 2019 ABC Exam



State of Oregon  
Department of  
Environmental  
Quality

## Overview

Oregon law requires only trained and certified operators manage wastewater collection and treatment systems. This ensures the systems are managed in a way that protects public health and the environment. To become certified, prospective operators must pass an exam approved by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. Oregon DEQ has administered the ABC 2017 Standardized exam since Jan. 1, 2019.

## New exams offered on Jan. 1, 2022

The Association of Boards of Certification develops standardized exams through a rigorous psychometric process and thorough job analysis.

**The application process, fees, and passing score (70%) will remain the same!**

As with the 2017 exams, in addition to the 100 items included on each exam, 10 unscored pre-test questions are administered to candidates completing a 2019 standardized exam. While pre-test questions will not impact candidates' scores, they are an important part of the standardized exam program because they allow psychometricians and subject matter experts to gather the statistical data needed to evaluate new items' performance and suitability for future exams. This effort on the 2017 exam yielded approximately 25 to 30% new content featured in the 2019 standardized exams.

## Need-to-Know Criteria

The ABC 2019 standardized exams continue to be in alignment with the previously published and widely utilized ABC Need-to-Know Criteria, or NTK. Each NTK document is based on an individual exam, rather than aggregating Class I-IV information in a single document. The NTK is an essential roadmap to what is included in ABC's standardized exams and can help operators prepare for success by including the following information:

- Clearly stated and streamlined job task statements
- Fixed and clear number of calculation items per exam
- Details of the number of recall, application, and analysis level items included in each content area

## Reporting

Programs implementing the 2019 standardized exams will continue to receive updated score and mastery reports. These reports are mapped to the NTK and offer diagnostic information about candidate performance on specific examination content areas. Candidates can utilize their score reports to determine in which exam content areas they should focus their future preparation efforts, and then consult the NTK for a complete list of testable operator job tasks included in that content area.

## 2019 Test Updates

Along with the release of the 2019 standardized exams, new versions of the ABC Formula/Conversion Tables, or FCT, tools are being released. A committee of industry volunteers reviewed feedback from trainers, engineers, certifiers and industry leaders, which led to a variety of FCT usability improvements for candidates. Most changes were made to clarify a particular formula or to standardize unit expressions in line with the new exams. Additionally, DEQ uses computer-based testing through PSI, and the FCTs for the 2019 exams will be accessible in a digital format within the testing interface. To aid in usability, the FCT layout has been redesigned horizontally to make formulas and tables easier to read.

## Frequently Asked Questions

You can review frequently asked questions on [ABC's website](#), or feel free to reach out to:

- **Paula Carson**, 503-229-5161, [paula.carson@deq.state.or.us](mailto:paula.carson@deq.state.or.us)
- **Kimi Grzyb**, 503-229-5349, [kimi.grzyb@deq.state.or.us](mailto:kimi.grzyb@deq.state.or.us)

Application materials are [available on our website](#) under Forms and Documents.

## Wastewater System Operator Certification Program

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