

Changes to Indiana Law Affect Certified Wastewater Treatment Operators

During the 2018 session of the Indiana General Assembly, the legislature enacted revisions to Indiana Code (IC) 13-18-11 (House Bill 1233) concerning certified wastewater treatment operators. This bill becomes effective July 1, 2018. These changes primarily affect license **renewals**. The changes include:

- The statutory authority for wastewater license renewals is now combined with the drinking water provision under IC 13-18-11-6.5, so that all wastewater and drinking water licenses in the future will expire and be renewed on a three-year cycle rather than the traditional two-year cycle. Drinking water licenses have been on a three-year renewal cycle for some time.

What this means: If you are used to renewing your license every two years, you will now need to renew it every three years. This change makes the effective term for wastewater and drinking water licenses the same. IDEM will continue to work with the Indiana Professional Licensing Agency to notify you prior to your license expiration. This does not affect the licenses that are being reissued currently, because the current group expires before the law change goes into effect. If your license expires June 30, 2018, and you submit a complete application, it will be renewed for two years, even if you are late in reapplying.

- This same provision of House Bill 1233 provides that licenses become non-renewable **one** year after the date the certificate expires.

What this means: Until now, wastewater licenses became non-renewable three years after they expired, meaning that if your license was expired for three years or less, you were only required to submit a renewal application with the necessary documentation and fee and your license would be renewed for two years. Beginning July 1, 2018, once a license has been expired for **one** year, it becomes non-renewable and the applicant is required to sit for and pass the exam again in order to become recertified as a licensed operator. This change makes the grace period for wastewater and drinking water licenses the same.

Further, the licenses of operators who allow or have already allowed them to expire will become non-renewable at an accelerated schedule. Licenses that expired June 30, 2016, June 30, 2017, and those that will expire June 30, 2018 will all become non-renewable after June 30, 2019 if they are not renewed prior to that date. Again, becoming non-renewable means that in order to return to being a certified wastewater operator, you will have to sit for and pass the exam in addition to satisfying all of the other normal renewal requirements, including continuing education.

- House Bill 1233 also provides for the first time that IDEM may grant reciprocity to operators already certified in U.S. territories if they meet all of the other requirements.

What this means: Until now, the language of IC 13-18-11-9 only allowed IDEM to grant a reciprocal license to individuals certified in other states, without the need to sit for or pass the exam, if they met certain other requirements. IDEM grants a handful of reciprocal licenses each year. This minor revision now includes licensed operators from U.S. territories who are able to meet the eligibility requirements for reciprocity.

- What else does this change in law mean?
These changes to the statute will require that equivalent changes be made to the Operator Certification Rule in 327 IAC 5-22. IDEM has requested approval to reopen the rule for changes. A rule change is a long-term effort, so it is very likely that during the renewal season in spring 2019 the statute and rule may contain different requirements for the effective period of license renewals. IDEM has not yet determined how this will be handled, but will be prepared when the time comes. One thing it certainly means is that the required contact hours for renewal will be changed to reflect a three-year cycle. For example, if your license has always required 10 contact hours during a two-year effective term, you now will be required to obtain 15 contact hours for a three-year license. Other changes to modernize and clarify the rule are anticipated, but currently the rule revision is very early in the process.

One More Point:

Renewal season is here, and online renewal is available at the Indiana Professional Licensing Agency website (<https://mylicense.in.gov/eGov/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2feGov%2f>). Many are taking advantage of this convenient option. Some people have had issues using the online renewal option. Once you enter your license number, the system should recognize who you are. If you do get a page asking for your Social Security number and birthdate, please DO NOT enter that information. It is not necessary for your license and will foul up the renewal process. If you run into this problem, please call Rebecca McMonigle at (317) 232-8791 for assistance. If submitting your renewal application by mail, it needs to be post marked by June 30. It's better to provide your information early and not wait until the last minute, as IDEM already has a large stack of applications waiting to be processed, and it will take about three weeks to get through the current applications.



For more information on wastewater operator certification and continuing education, visit IDEM's website: www.idem.IN.gov/cleanwater/2393.htm

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