



Water and Wastewater Works Advisory Board

**State of Alaska
Department of Environmental Conservation**

Policy Statement 2021-03 Counting Experience for Remote Operation

Background

With advances in instrumentation and increased access to reliable internet, remote operation and monitoring of water and wastewater treatment systems is becoming more commonplace. Process control for some systems may be substantially accomplished remotely and there are already systems and operators who have been using remote operations either as a component of their normal operations or as part of an Alternate Method of System Supervision (AMOSS) plan.

The Department has received inquiries from operators about how their remote operation experience will be counted towards operator certification requirements. While some operators remotely monitor systems as part of a regular operation schedule which also includes daily or regular on-site duties, other operators may have a majority of their time spent remotely with very little on-site time in a plant.

Introduction

The Department requested that the Board discuss the issue and develop a policy for the Department to count remote operation experience towards certification requirements.

Discussion

The Board discussed how there are aspects of on-site operation that are critical to understanding the operation of water and wastewater treatment systems. When an operator is working remotely there are many important aspects of on-site operations that are not present, such as routine O&M of equipment, mixing & handling of chemicals, sampling, general plant upkeep, and on-site troubleshooting.

The Board recognizes that it is reasonable to credit some remote operation time towards certification experience requirements, but that on-site operation experience is critical to operators gaining experience and that remote operation experience should not be used to wholly fulfill the experience requirements.

Policy

For the purposes of the policy, remote operation is defined as: time that an operator spends directly viewing real-time instrumentation and making process control changes via SCADA, as well as time spent reviewing system data generated from SCADA, making calculations and process control decisions to be implemented in the future, communicating with on-site operators, and other duties that are directly related to the operation of the system.

Remote operation would not include time when an operator is merely “on-call”: when the system is operating but the remote operator only interacts with it for occasional SCADA checks, or when there is an alarm.

The Department will count remote operation experience using the following criteria:

For Level 1 certifications the Department will count a maximum of three months of remote operation experience towards the specific experience requirement found in the Operator Certification Regulations at 18 AAC 74.050(b)(2). Any additional remote operation experience will count towards the total experience requirement.

For Level 2 and higher certifications the Department will count a maximum of six months of remote operation experience towards the specific experience requirement found in the Operator Certification Regulations at 18 AAC 74.050(b)(2). Any additional remote operation experience will count towards the total experience requirement.

Adopted this second day of June 2021

/Mark Buggins/ Mark Buggins

Chair, Water and Wastewater Works Advisory Board

(Effective June 2, 2021)