

Project Summary

The USEPA requires that all Class A drinking water systems have a certified licensed operator to manage the facility. In response to this mandate, states requested funds to implement the standard.

The State of Ohio received a grant from the USEPA of approximately \$4.5 million. Ohio EPA organized the grant and in 2006 the Ohio EPA issued a RFP to begin work on the certification of operators for Class A Small Drinking Water Systems. 360water, Inc., of Columbus, Ohio, was awarded the contract in June of 2006.

Challenge

There are 1,495 Class A Drinking Water systems in Ohio. The Ohio EPA requires a licensed operator at all systems

The Ohio EPA issued a limited license to anyone who had already been working on that system (grandfathering). The limited license was restricted to the system where the operator was currently working.

Workplace turnover at small systems presents a major challenge for small communities and for the Ohio EPA. Small systems need qualified operators and Ohio EPA needs to regulate the work. Most small drinking water systems are located at schools, campgrounds, churches, and manufactured home communities. Therefore, demand was high for local training sessions held at locations convenient for persons seeking certification.

Based on Ohio's small community geography, 360water selected the following eight locations around the state to meet this need: Kent, Athens, Cambridge, Columbus, Springfield, Sandusky, Defiance, and Wilmington.

Original course content was created by 360water for the small system training. 360water worked with veteran drinking water operators, Ohio EPA staff, and its own subject matter experts to build an appropriate curriculum. In addition, the training content included practical information utilized in the field such as monthly operating reports, water quality testing equipment, safety training, and applicable state regulations.

Training was offered in two formats: online and face-to-face. Two different formats allowed the candidates options to learn at their own pace online, and to learn in a classroom setting from expert drinking water operators.

OhioEPA



“Recent federal guidelines require very small public water system owners to obtain the services of certified operators to oversee the production of drinking water. We are excited about getting a federal grant that allows us to assist the small business community and ensure that small systems are able to obtain training and certification for free. This program will help ensure that the citizens of Ohio are receiving safe drinking water.”

**Andrew Barienbrock,
Ohio EPA
Division of Drinking & Ground Waters,
Operator Unit Certification Supervisor**

Solution

360water based the training course content on the Association of Boards of Certification’s (ABCERT) “need to know” criteria for small drinking water systems. The classroom training included a full day of four sessions given by an experienced Class 4 licensed water operator. After the training session, the small systems examination was given to the candidates. Independent proctors from the Ohio Water Environment Association monitored the examination.

Small systems training was also offered online at <http://OEPA.360water.com>, an interactive training website created by 360water for the Ohio EPA. In addition to the same course content as the face-to-face sessions, the training website provided supplemental information and training workbooks. Users at the online site could download all training course content for further review and study. Access to online course content with downloading features helped those candidates who could not leave work to attend the full day small systems training course. After a candidate completed his online coursework, he was prepared to sit for the small systems examination.

360water provided special training sessions for the Ohio Manufactured Homes Association and the Ohio Campground Association. Between September 2006 through June 2007, 360water provided 71 training sessions with a maximum of 35 candidates per session.

Project Outcome

Program Extension

Although the original contact specified that the program would end in June 2007, demand for the classes continued. Therefore, 360water requested that Ohio EPA extend the project for 6 months in order to reach more candidates.

The project was extended to December 31, 2007, which allowed an additional 4 training sessions: 3 in August and 1 in October. Attendance was high: each training class was filled to capacity.

Final Numbers

1,144 candidates attended 75 training sessions with an average passing rate of 92.5%. This meant that approximately 1,050 people earned their small systems license through 360water’s program.

