MEMO

TO                 Water and Wastewater Operator
                    Examination Providers

FROM               Lisa D. Daniels
                    Director
                    Bureau of Safe Drinking Water

DATE               March 23, 2020

RE                 Water and Wastewater Operator Certification Exams during
                    COVID-19 Response

The following provides a summary of the current guidance from the Department of
Environmental Protection (DEP or Department) and the Operator Certification Board regarding
upcoming water and wastewater operator certification exams during the response to the
COVID-19 public health emergency. Please note that this is subject to change as the situation
evolves.

It is critical to the Department, the Certification Board, and the industry that adequate water and
wastewater testing opportunities are maintained. To the extent feasible, it is the Department’s
goal to maintain as many of the scheduled exams as possible. However, we must make
decisions based on whether it is possible to do so in a manner that does not conflict with
Commonwealth recommendations and directives which are intended to prevent further
spread of COVID-19.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have
restricted “large” group gatherings. This number continues to change and has been steadily
reduced over the past week from “250” to “10” people. The Department must also consider the
various restrictions on travel and non-essential business closings. Due to these restrictions, some
examinations will need to be postponed and rescheduled at a later date.

The overall situation is unknown and the Department does not intend to apply restrictions in
place today to examinations scheduled months into the future. Additionally, the Department
does not plan to cancel or postpone exams without sufficient notice. In order to make timely
decisions using current guidance from Commonwealth officials, the Department will evaluate
each examination two weeks prior to the examination date.

Therefore, until further notice, the Department will implement the following approach
prior to each operator certification exam:

1. Two weeks (14 calendar days / 10 business days) prior to each exam, administrators of
   water and wastewater operator exams should contact Laura Chambers, Board Secretary,
   (information provided below) to discuss the current situation.
2. At that time, current guidance on large group size, travel restrictions, availability of healthy proctors, whether the test venue is open, etc. will be considered to make a postponement decision.

3. If the exam will be postponed, the approved exam provider will provide written notice of the postponement as soon as possible to each examinee.

Please note that as the approved provider for the examination, you may choose to implement a more stringent or more proactive cancellation policy.

Please note that some operators may need to cancel last minute due to their health, or the health of a family member. They may be called upon to respond to COVID-19 related emergencies – such as staffing shortages – at their water or wastewater treatment facility. Therefore, we encourage liberal cancellation and reschedule policies during these challenging times. The Department will work with examination providers regarding reschedule dates for all postponed exams.

Certified operators are a critical resource. Thank you for your efforts to ensure our examinations move forward in a manner that does not compromise the health of this critical resource. Please contact Laura Chambers, Board Secretary, with your questions by email at lchambers@pa.gov or by phone at (717) 772-5158.