



FROM THE SOUTH CAROLINA ENVIRONMENTAL CERTIFICATION BOARD

# THANK YOU!

To everyone who attended the South Carolina Environmental Certification Board's inaugural Symposium on July, 30 2025. This important event brought together leaders from across the water and wastewater industry to discuss upcoming **CERTIFICATION EXAM CHANGES** and share insight into **CURRENT WORKFORCE CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS.**



## New Certification Exams for Operators

Effective August 1, 2025, new operators and existing operators updating their certification level, will take Water Professionals International (WPI)'s 2025 Standard Certification Exams for:

- Water Treatment (Classes D through A)
- Water Distribution (Classes D through A)
- Biological Wastewater (Classes D through A)

Symposium participants heard directly from WPI keynote speakers—Thomas Healy, Vice President of WPI, and Isabelle Gonthier, PhD, ICE-CCP—who provided an in-depth overview of how these exams are created through a rigorous, nationally validated process. Each exam is developed by operators, for operators, using industrywide job analyses and subject matter expert input to ensure they reflect the tasks and knowledge essential to success in the field.

Attendees raised thoughtful concerns about exam clarity, alignment with real-world job duties, and preparation resources. Discussions also covered the use of WPI exams in other states, how performance is monitored and adjusted over time, and the need to better prepare future examinees through targeted training. The Board values this feedback and is committed to continuing conversations on these important topics.

**BOARD EXAM  
GUIDANCE**

**WPI EXAM  
OVERVIEW**

**WPI EXAM  
DEVELOPMENT**



## Preparing for Exams

Start with WPI's Need-to-Know Criteria and study tools to help prepare for the new exams.

**STUDY RESOURCES &  
NEED-TO-KNOW  
CRITERIA**

## Get Involved

Explore ways to contribute, connect with peers, and learn more at WPI's 2025 Annual Conference in South Carolina.

**WPI'S ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE**



## Top 5 Workforce Insights

1

## Unstructured Career Pathways

Many applicants lack the math, science, and problem-solving skills needed to pass certification exams. Leaders recommend expanding access to pre-apprenticeships, mentoring programs, and targeted training to help build technical competence and confidence.

2

## Academic and Career Deficiencies

The industry remains under the radar for many students. Early outreach—starting as early as 5th or 8th grade—through career days, school partnerships, and initiatives like MEBA can introduce the value of clean water careers and attract mission-driven candidates.

3

## Low Awareness and Industry Perception

The absence of a unified pipeline limits long-term workforce development. Expanding dual enrollment, creating water certificate programs in high schools, and formally recognizing utilities as a career cluster are critical steps forward.

4

## Recruitment and Retention Hurdles

Limited visibility impact the industry's ability to compete for talent. Employers are encouraged to offer competitive compensation, clearly map advancement opportunities, and emphasize the public health mission and values younger workers care about.

5

## Certification and Testing Barriers

Testing remains a major hurdle—even for qualified candidates. Leaders call for increased support in math and exam preparation, careful oversight to preserve exam integrity, and ongoing analysis of certification trends across states to identify best practices.

2%↓

Licensed operators decreased by  
157 licenses from 2020 to 2024.  
Average Age = 47

28%↑

Licensed trainees increased by  
434 licenses from 2020 to 2024.  
Average Age = 40

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## 2025 Symposium Panelists



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Making South Carolina a Safe Place to Work and Live

**South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation**

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