

This *Guide to Hiring a Contract Operator* is strictly a guidance document created in response to the problems some small water systems have finding and hiring full-time water operators. The Illinois EPA maintains a list of certified operators available for contract operations and provides the list upon request. You may contact the **Drinking Water Operator Certification Program staff, 217/785-0561**, to obtain the *Contract Drinking Water Operator Source List*.

## COUNTIES GROUPED BY REGIONAL OFFICE LOCATION

*(Telephone Numbers Appear Beneath Region)*

<b>1</b> <b>Rockford</b> <b>815/987-7760</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Elgin</b> <b>847/608-3131</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Champaign</b> <b>217/333-8361</b>	<b>5</b> <b>Springfield</b> <b>217/557-8761</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Collinsville</b> <b>618/346-5120</b>	<b>7</b> <b>Marion</b> <b>618/993-7200</b>
Boone Bureau Carroll DeKalb Henry JoDaviess LaSalle Lee Marshall Mercer Ogle Putnam Rock Island Stark Stephenson Whiteside Winnebago Woodford	Cook DuPage Grundy Kane Kankakee Kendall Lake McHenry Will	Champaign Clark Coles Crawford Cumberland DeWitt Douglas Edgar Effingham Ford Iroquois Jasper Livingston McLean Macon Moultrie Piatt Shelby Vermilion	Adams Brown Cass Christian Fulton Hancock Henderson Knox Logan McDonough Macoupin Mason Menard Montgomery Morgan Peoria Pike Sangamon Schuyler Scott Tazewell Warren	Bond Calhoun Clinton Fayette Greene Jersey Madison Marion Monroe Randolph St. Clair Washington	Alexander Clay Edwards Franklin Gallatin Hamilton Hardin Jackson Jefferson Johnson Lawrence Massac Perry Pope Pulaski Richland Saline Union Wabash Wayne White Williamson

**FACT SHEET**  
**FOR HIRING CONTRACTUAL OPERATORS**  
**FOR PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY FACILITIES**

It is often necessary for owners of small water supply facilities, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Environmental Protection Act and the Federal (U.S. EPA) Safe Drinking Water Act, to hire outside contractual operating services to help ensure regulatory compliance. Always remember that as owner, you have ultimate responsibility for ensuring your water supply facility receives proper operation and maintenance and distributes safe, potable water. The contractual operator must possess the required level of certification for your particular facility, and should have experience operating similar type of treatment processes.

It is also desirable for the contract operator to be capable of performing operational testing and routine mechanical and electrical maintenance. This may provide a cost savings versus hiring additional commercial services for testing and maintenance. However, it needs to be recognized that commercial services and/or consulting engineering services may be required for more complex maintenance or operating problems.

The submission of compliance samples to a certified laboratory can be part of the duties performed by the operator, as part of the contract. Certified laboratory service is provided by the owner through the Illinois EPA Lab Fee Program, a certified municipal laboratory or a certified private laboratory. The cost of certified laboratory services will depend on the type of analyses required for your water system. The fees charged by individual laboratories may vary; comparative shopping is recommended.

The following information should be obtained when interviewing potential contract operator candidates:

1. Does the candidate possess the required certificate of competency? If you have questions regarding the level of certification required for your particular facility, contact your Illinois EPA regional office.
2. Does the candidate have experience operating your type and size of treatment plant and distribution system? For example, an iron removal plant is operated differently than a zeolite softening plant. It is possible that an operator may possess the correct certification level, and not possess prior experience compatible with your type of water plant.
3. How many years of operating experience does the candidate possess?
4. Does the candidate have references? These references should be verified.
5. Can the candidate perform minor repairs, required operational testing and basic system troubleshooting? If so, is the candidate willing to perform this work as part of the contractual agreement?
6. Does the candidate carry adequate contractors' liability insurance? This helps protect the owner from potential suits in case the contractor or a contractor's employee is injured. It also provides protection in the event of contractor damage to the owner's equipment.
7. Is the contract operator willing to turn over all records to the owner of the supply at the time of contract termination?

***A list of the duties which, at a minimum, must be completed*** should be included in the contract. A sample list is provided on pages 4, 5, and 6. The sample ***list*** may be modified, as necessary, to meet the specific operational needs of your facility. All participants should retain a copy of the final contractual agreement, signed by all parties. A *Notification of Certified Operator in Responsible Charge* form must be completed by the owner and by the operator; this form must be sent to the Illinois EPA. The contract operator is responsible for maintaining adequate records to document that all contract provisions are being met and to assure that the agreed upon duties are performed. The owner should also retain contract copies and routinely review operations to assure the contract operator is performing all of the required duties.

## **GUIDANCE FOR CONTRACTUAL OPERATION OF A PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY (PWS)**

*Once parties entering the contract are identified, contract duration, compensation, operator time and owner time should be delineated.*

### **CONTRACT DURATION**

*The contract duration should include the effective starting date and the effective termination date. This contract should have an agreement of termination ( by either party) by advanced, written notice of a specified number of days.*

### **COMPENSATION**

*Compensation covers items such as wages, health benefits, workmen's compensation, vacation, sick time, disability, holiday time, and paid paternity or maternity leave.*

### **OPERATOR TIME**

*The owner and operator shall jointly designate the number of visits and the minimum number of hours spent per week at the PWS by the operator.*

### **OWNER TIME**

*The responsibility that will be retained by the owner must be clearly documented.* The operator will provide a list of routine operational checks to be made by the owner. The owner will notify the operator of any operational problems which arise in the operator's absence for which the operator is responsible.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF PARTIES

The contract should describe the responsibility(y)ies of the operator and the owner. At a minimum, the following items should be considered when preparing a contract:

- 1) Proper operation of the water treatment plant including assurance that
  - a) required construction permits have been obtained prior to the start of construction;
  - b) operating permits have been obtained prior to start of operation; and
  - c) special reports are filed with the appropriate parties.
- 2) Sample collection is completed pursuant to Illinois EPA requirements in 35 Ill. Adm. Code 611, and Codes 651 to 654. Timely collection and submission of samples for Laboratory Analyses and follow-up as needed when results indicate violations or a trend toward violation.
- 3) Preparation and submittal of Monthly Operational Reports.
- 4) Analyses for operational control such as chlorine residual, turbidity, alkalinity, hardness, jar testing and other related activities is performed as required or recommended. This includes maintenance of operational records.
- 5) Maintaining pumps and pump stations .
- 6) Maintaining distribution system.
- 7) Maintaining spare parts inventory.
- 8) Maintaining required operating records and reports.
- 9) Securing labor and ordering materials for correcting any maintenance and operational problems.
- 10) Maintaining, and if necessary, implementing an emergency operating plan.
- 11) Performing preventive maintenance on equipment as recommended by the manufacturer.
- 12) Performing routine operational control testing as required or recommended by the Illinois EPA. A listing of process control tests to be performed, and a monthly process control operational report form to be maintained, should be included as part of this contract..
- 13) Prompt reporting of deficiencies in any of the above to the owner.
- 14) Reporting to IEPA when required (i.e. when a boil order is issued, when an MCL is exceeded, when an emergency condition occurs, etc.).
- 15) Being available during an emergency to work with IEMA, IEPA or other State or local Agencies until problem is resolved and supply is returned to normal operation.

***The contract must be signed by all parties: the owner, the operator, and,*** in cases where the

contractor is a firm or company, an official of the firm or company employing the certified operator must also sign the contract.

or

***The contract must be signed by all parties: the owner, the contractor, and,*** in cases where the contractor is a firm or company, the certified operator employed by the contractor must also sign the contract.