How to Become a Certified Operator in Massachusetts Q&A

September 17, 2026

How to become certified as a Drinking Water Operator in Massachusetts

Goal:

- Provide information about the process of obtaining a license to operate a public water system in Massachusetts.
- Brief power point presentation overview

Answer questions you may have about:

- Your specific situation
- How to fill out application or provide information for review by the Board of Certification
- Where you can get more information

HOW TO BECOME CERTIFIED AS A DRINKING WATER OPERATOR IN MASSACHUSETTS



1. EXPERIENCE

Operators should begin acquiring experience in a PWS.



2. PRE-REQUISITE TRAINING

Operators seeking Grade 1 or VSS licenses are not required to take pre-requisite training.

Pre-requisite training is required for operators seeking a Grade 2 or higher license before sitting for those exams. Schedule and take pre-req training(s) or apply to the Board to waive the pre-req training requirement.



3. SCHEDULING EXAMS

Signup for the exam on the PSI website. NOTE: Exams must be taken sequentially.

https://test-takers.psiexams.com/abc-ma/test



4. TAKING EXAMS

Exams are computer-based and taken at PSI test centers located throughout the state.

You can select your preferred test center location when you sign up for your exam.



5. EXAM RESULTS

After passing the exam, operators apply for a license from the Board. Operators must apply for a license within one year of the passing date.
If the operator fails the exam, they can retake the exam until they pass.



6. APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Submit an application to the Board for a license.



7. REVIEW

The Board reviews the application for the proper pre-req training (if necessary), exam, education, and experience requirements.

If the operator meets all requirements, they will be issued a full license.

If the operator does not meet all requirements, they may be issued an Operator-in-Training (OIT) license

For more information, please visit https://www.mass.gov/lists/certified-operators or email program.director-dwp@mass.gov

First some basic information

- An applicant for a license can be granted **Operator-In-Training** or **Full Operator** status.

- To obtain a license you will need to **pass a written exam**.
- Full license status: meet minimum **education and experience requirements** for the grade of license sought.

- The **Department of Environmental Protection** evaluates each public water system and assigns a distribution system or treatment system class.

    - Grading takes into account the size/population served and the complexity of the treatment processes (310 CMR 22.11B)

    - Water vending machine – VND license
    - Very small system – VSS license
    - Class I, II, III or IV – Grade 1, 2 , 3, or 4 license
    - Licenses are issued for either distribution system operation or treatment

Pre-requisite training to take exam

- **Grade 1 or VSS**: **no training required**
- **Grade 2** or higher exam: pre-requisite **training required**
- Course providers are pre-approved by Drinking Water License Board

- **D2, D3 or D4** exams: Satisfactory completion of **Basic Distribution Training Course**
  - Minimum requirement is 35 classroom hours

- **T2** exam: Satisfactory completion of **Basic Treatment Training Course**
  - Minimum requirement is 35 classroom hours

- **T3 or T4** exams: Satisfactory completion of **Advanced Treatment Training Course**
  - Minimum requirement is 35 classroom hours
  - Basic treatment training course also required unless you have T2 Operator-in-Training or Full license

Pre-requisite training to take exam

- After you attend the training:

- Must provide proof of training when applying for license
- Training waivers available. Typically require higher education and minimum operation experience

- Board of Certification of Operators of Drinking Water Supply Facilities approved education courses to sit for examination | Mass.gov

Scheduling and taking the exam

- Exams **must be taken sequentially** (example: to obtain a T3 license, you must provide proof of taking and passing the T1, T2 and T3 exams)
- **Exams are computer based** and **conducted by a third party** company "PSI" which administers the proctored exams at test locations throughout the state.
- Sign up for exams and choose from available dates and locations online at https:/test-takers.psiexams.com/abc-ma or by calling (855) 746-8173
- There is **a fee for taking the exam**. Military veterans can have the fee waived.
- Study/prepare for your exam before you arrive. There are resources available to help you prepare.
- If you do not pass, you can retake the exam until you pass.

You passed the exam! Now what?

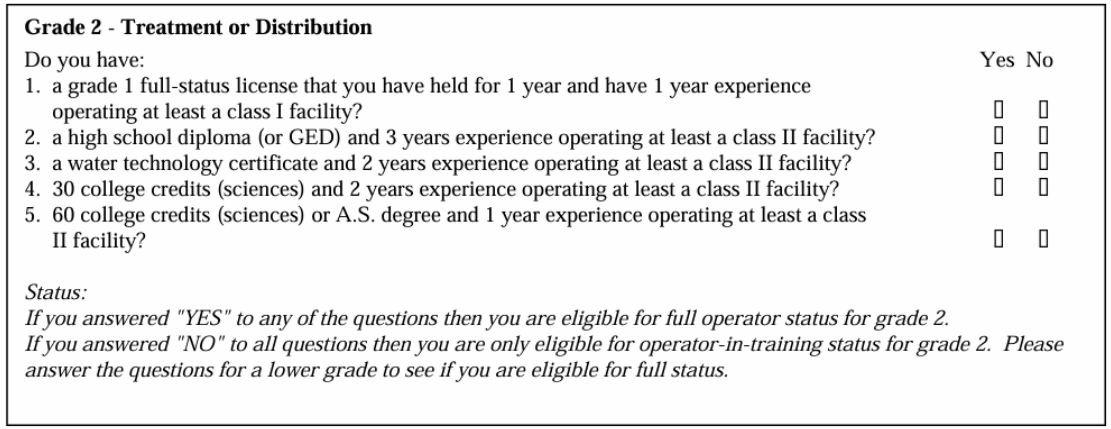
- Successfully passing the exam *does not mean you have a license*! You **must apply** for a license and have it approved by the Board of Licensure of Drinking Water Supply Operators.

- There is a worksheet available on the Board's website to help **evaluate if you qualify** for a full license or an operator-in-training license. [www.mass.gov/doc/education-and-experience-requirements-worksheet-0]

- If you do not meet the qualifications for a full license, you can obtain an operator-in-training license.

- Whether you apply for a full license or an operator-in-training license, **you must apply within one year of passing the exam**

- If you do not qualify for a full license, you **can apply for an upgrade to full operator status in the future** after obtaining the additional experience or education required.



Grade 2 - Treatment or Distribution

Do you have:	Yes	No
1. a grade 1 full-status license that you have held for 1 year and have 1 year experience operating at least a class I facility?	☐	☐
2. a high school diploma (or GED) and 3 years experience operating at least a class II facility?	☐	☐
3. a water technology certificate and 2 years experience operating at least a class II facility?	☐	☐
4. 30 college credits (sciences) and 2 years experience operating at least a class II facility?	☐	☐
5. 60 college credits (sciences) or A.S. degree and 1 year experience operating at least a class II facility?	☐	☐

Status:
If you answered "YES" to any of the questions then you are eligible for full operator status for grade 2.
If you answered "NO" to all questions then you are only eligible for operator-in-training status for grade 2. Please answer the questions for a lower grade to see if you are eligible for full status.

Summary of education and experience requirements to obtain ‘Full’ license

	Grade 1		Grade 2			Grade 3				Grade 4			
Education	HSD or GED	Certificate or 1 yr college	HSD or GED	Cert. or 1 yr coll.	AS or 2 yr coll.	HSD or GED	Cert. or 1 yr coll.	AS or 2 yr coll.	BS or 4 yr coll.	HS or GED	Cert. or 1 yr coll.	AS or 2 yr coll.	BS or 4 yr coll.
Exper. *	2 yr	1 yr	3 yr	2 yr	1yr	5 yr	4 yr	3 yr	1 yr	N/A	5 yr	4 yr	2 yr
With existing license	N/A		Grade 1 Full – 1 additional yr* in Grade 1 or higher system			Grade 2 Full – 2 additional yrs* in Grade 2 or higher system				Grade 3 Full – 1 additional yr* in Grade 3 or higher system			

* = Full time experience in either distribution or treatment segment (depending on license sought) of public water system of appropriate grade

How experience is evaluated

- License requirements are **based on full time experience** operating either the distribution or treatment segment of a drinking water system.

- **If you split your time** between distribution and treatment operation or some other job duties, you are credited for only the amount of time you work operating the drinking water system segment.

    - Example: You have two years of experience and divide your time equally between distribution and treatment. You will be credited with one year of distribution experience and one year of treatment experience.

- There is a special provision if you work in a **small system** (Class 1 or 2 for both distribution and treatment) that may allow you to combine treatment and distribution experience. 236 CMR 4.01 (14)

- **Part time experience** is converted to full time experience on the basis of a 2,000 hour work year.
    - Experience is reported on time spent each week on operations tasks up to 40 hours.
    - Overtime. You cannot get credit beyond the actual time elapsed. Example: working 60 hours in one week does not equate to 1-1/2 weeks of experience.

Acceptable Experience

- **DWB Policy 2013-01** Standard Operating Procedure for Evaluating Experience of Applicants for Certification

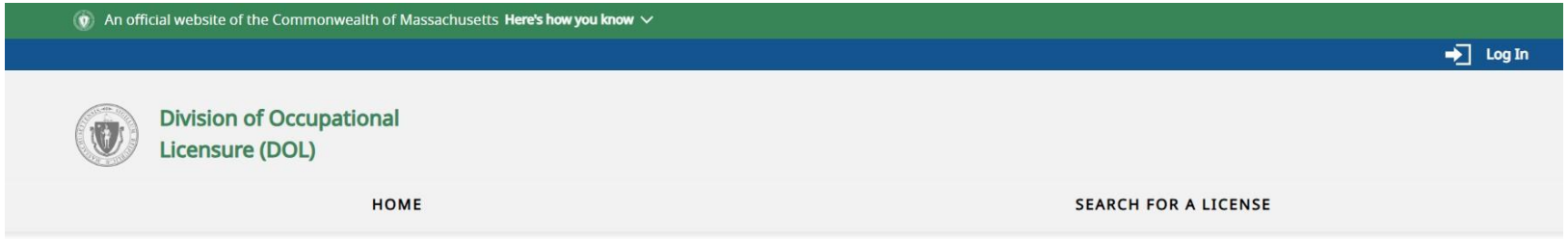
- **Examples: Distribution System Operation**
  - Installation and/or repair of water mains, services, hydrants, valves and meters
  - Inspection and maintenance of pumping stations including cleaning, lubrication and repairs of machinery and equipment
  - Development and/or directing hydrant flushing programs

- **Examples: Treatment System Operation**
  - Calibrating and maintaining chemical feed equipment
  - Process control sampling and monitoring
  - Inspection/maintenance of surface water intake facilities, wells and well fields

- **Examples: Unacceptable experience**
  - General administrative supervision
  - Engineering design
  - Lab analyses performed by private labs
  - Administrative or clerical duties involved with customer relations, billing, payroll, timekeeping

Application for Licensure

- New eLIPSE platform for applying for, upgrading or renewing licenses
- eLIPSE replaced previous system in May 2026



- Need:
  - Email address
  - Cell phone
- Create ‘business account’ not ‘personal account’
- Will prompt to link existing licenses, provide personal info or license number. If no licenses, just skip

Application for Licensure (cont)

- Attach exam results. Exam within 1 year of application
  - Proof of taking exams in sequence
  - Proof of pre-requisite training

- Proof of education beyond high school
  - Copy of Associates, Bachelors or Masters in Science degree
  - Copy of approved certificate in water treatment technology or college transcripts

- Proof of experience
  - Provide **one form for each job/position**.
  - Provide the dates worked.
  - Describe duties, breakdown of distribution and treatment responsibilities and class of system.
  - Provide a letter from your supervisor or employer verifying employment. Or provide a job description.

Board of Licensure Review

- Board meets monthly (usually first Friday of each month) to review/approve applications. Agendas are published in advance of the meeting at the DOL website.

- Meetings are virtual and open to the public

- You do not need to attend if your license application is on the agenda

- The Board will either:
  - Approve the application for the license grade sought
  - Deny the application and issue an OIT license if education/experience insufficient for full license
  - Request additional information/clarification. You may be asked to appear at the next Board meeting.

- You will be notified of the Board's decision by staff in the weeks following the meeting.