Information Session: Career Opportunities as a Drinking Water Operator for Vocational Technical Schools & Students

SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

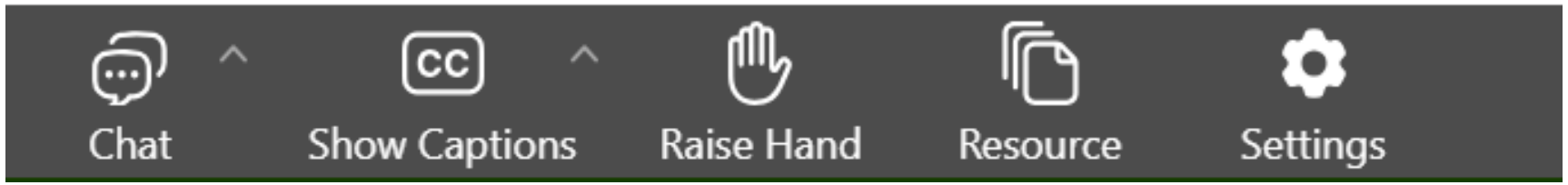
Features Available on Zoom (located in bottom banner)

Chat: Use Chat to ask questions, respond to prompts, and participate in discussion

Show Captions: Turn captions on or off, select your preferred language, and view the live transcript

Raise Hand: During the Q&A session, raise your hand using this button to unmute and ask a question

Resources: Access presentation materials, handouts, and links shared during the webinar



Speakers



Bob Hoyt
UMass Amherst
Technical Assistance Provider (TAP)



Dave Coppes
UMass Amherst
Technical Assistance Provider (TAP)

Is a Career in Drinking Water Right for You?

Goal:

- Provide information about the field of drinking water operations and maintenance.
- Introduce two retired drinking water operators with years of experience in the industry
- Brief power point presentation overview
- Video



Answer questions you may have about:

- How to become a drinking water operator
- What licenses may be required
- Where you can get more information



What is a Drinking Water Operator?

- Individuals that manage, operate or maintain **Public Water Systems**

- When you turn on your faucet, the water that comes out started at a well or reservoir that is protected from sources of contamination. It may have been treated with chemicals or treatment processes to assure its purity and potability. It was probably pumped into a system of pipes and stored in tanks before it came to your home.

- Drinking water is regulated by state and federal rules to assure it is healthy and safe. Drinking water operators **make sure** that the water **meets all applicable drinking water regulations**.





What is a Drinking Water Operator (cont)?

- Drinking water operators **run the equipment and control the processes** to treat the water and to convey it to our homes.

- They **maintain** and repair pipes, valves, pumps, controls, generators and other equipment used to produce safe drinking water.

- They **sample and test water** to ensure that treatment is working correctly and that the safety of the water has been maintained.



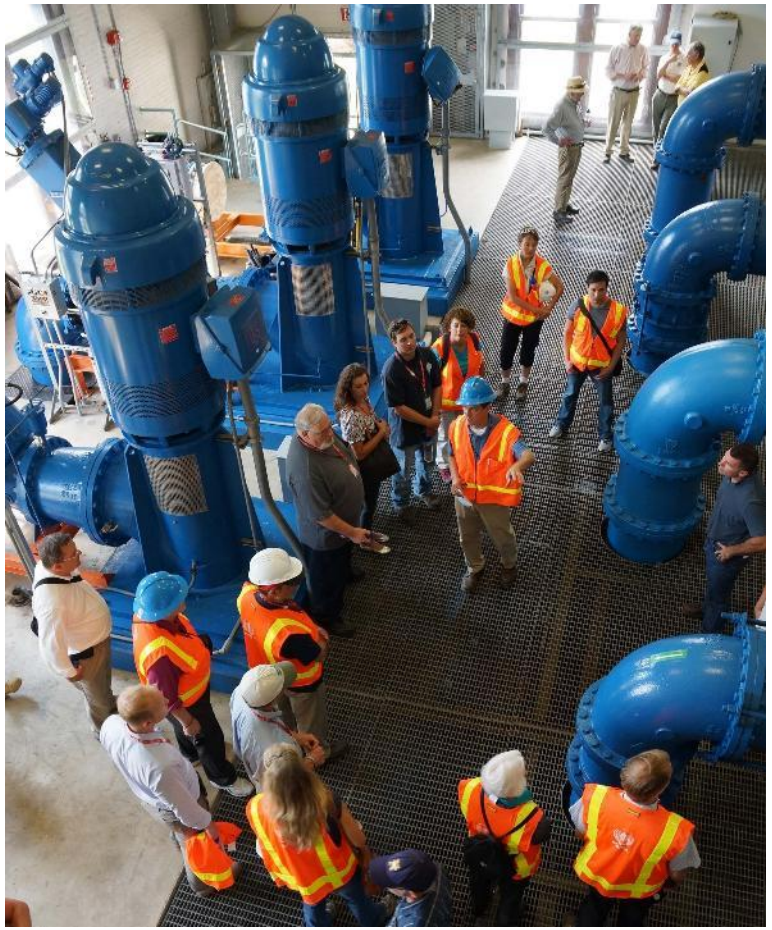


…may be right for you if:

- You are looking for a **meaningful career** that makes a huge, positive difference in the health and safety of your community.

- You are drawn to **hands-on, physical work**. Drinking water operators spend much of their days on their feet, inspecting facilities, climbing ladders, lifting objects while ensuring that equipment and processes are in working order.

- You have **good problem solving and communication skills**. Drinking water operators must think on their feet while troubleshooting issues that arise in their water system. They must communicate clearly and effectively with managers, town officials, regulators and the public.



…may be right for you if (cont):

- You have **good observation skills and pay attention to detail**. Operators need to detect hazards, read blueprints, work with complex equipment and follow procedures. These skills will be developed with training and through experience.

- You want **career stability and opportunity for advancement**. Water is a necessary part of our lives. There will always be jobs in the drinking water industry. Many systems offer excellent benefits. As experienced drinking water operators retire there is room for motivated licensed operators to move up.





Water Works: Careers with Purpose



View the “Water Works: Careers with Purpose” video here: Water Works: Careers with Purpose (11.5 minutes)

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

Basic information about drinking water operator licenses

- There are several types and levels of license.

- 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

Basic information about drinking water operator licenses (cont)

- A license can be issued for **treatment (T)** or for **distribution (D)**.
- 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.
- An applicant for a license can be granted **Operator-In-Training** or **Full Operator** status.

More information

Contact Information

- Dave Coppes: David.Coppes@mass.gov
- Bob Hoyt: Hoyt047@gmail.com
- Jacqueline White: jvwhite@umass.edu

Videos

- Water Works: Careers with Purpose
- Water you waiting for?

Organizations

- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) website
- Massachusetts Water Works Association (MWWA)
- New England Water Works Association (NEWWA)

Upcoming Trainings: Q&A and Office Hours

FREE Online (1-hour) Operator Certification Q&A Session
Thursday, September 17, 2026; 10:00 – 11:00 am ET; webinar
1 TCHs
Join UMass Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) for a FREE virtual Q&A and office hours session designed to help drinking water operators and other interested individuals navigate the operator certification process.
Registration link: https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/meeting/register/ASxlOuP2RaeSBZQmzx5Z7g#/registration

FREE Operator Certification office hours session: Set up an appointment
Have questions following the webinar? Schedule a 15-minute one-on-one conversation with UMass TAPs to ask questions and receive individual guidance on the operator certification process
Registration link: Book an appointment With a UMass TAP

Upcoming Trainings: Prepare for VSS, T1, D1 Certification Exams

These free introductory trainings prepare students for the Very Small Systems (VSS), Distribution (D1), and Treatment (T1) drinking water operator exams by covering small water system operations, including sampling, wells, distribution, storage, treatment, reporting, regulations, and essential water math. Participants will gain practical knowledge and skills to support exam success.

FREE Online VSS, D1, T1 (1/2 Day) Certified Drinking Water Operator Training
Offered by UMass Amherst
3 TCHs (Pending BOC approval)
This half-day training is being offered on three different dates. Each session covers the same content, so participants may select one of the following dates:

1. **October 8, 2026 8:30 AM-12:00 PM**
    - Registration link: https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/meeting/register/i65e0SnlRv6C06XdCl85Xg
2. **October 29, 2026 8:30 AM-12:00 PM**
    Registration link: https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/meeting/register/SJRSFEEnTjaBmInrp6atZw
3. **November 19, 2026 8:30 AM-12:00 PM**
    - Registration Link: https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/meeting/register/XuJOl-9TRNCYLbmlwbn-Wg

FREE In-person VSS, D1, T1 (3 Day) Certified Drinking Water Operator Training
Offered by Mass Rural Water Association
Date: MRWA: Essex October 9, 16, 30 2026 8:30 AM-3:30 PM
18 TCHs
Registration link: https://massrwa.wufoo.com/forms/vss-d1-t1-cert-exam-prep-course-3-day-m1f5aaie1u8dkgh/