

Creating Your Own Pool of Certified Plant Operators

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aced with increasingly stringent reg-ulatory requirements, advancing treatment technology, significant population growth, and a limited number of certified plant operators with advanced technical experience, publicly owned treatment works often fall short in their attempts to recruit and retain competent operators. Faced with competition from other facilities, the Littleton-Englewood Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) recently experienced a shortage of qualified personnel. Relying on little more than a skeleton operations crew, plant management faced a crisis as it tried to outfit three shifts that could staff the plant around the clock.

These critical circumstances forced the plant's managerial team to revamp its recruitment strategy. Instead of recruiting operators on the basis of skills, certification, and experience, management began emphasizing the need for operators to have the proper attitude and aptitude. In turn, a training course — known as the apprentice operator program — was developed to provide new employees with the skills and certification needed to become a plant operator. The program has succeeded tremendously and is expected to supply the staff and the recruitment strategy needed to carry the treatment plant forward in the future.

In Colorado, wastewater operators

are certified progressively based on experience. A first-year operator begins at the "D" level and after 2 years graduates to the "C" level. After 3 years of experience, an operator is certified at the "B" level. An operator with 4 years

or more experience is certified at the "A" level. As of spring 2004, the state of Colorado has a total of 2211 actively certified wastewater operators. Of these,

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Staff Training Key to Good Security

Secure facilities have become a greater priority for utilities in recent years. However, a facility is only as secure as its personnel can make it.

"I believe that any security expert will tell you that the most critical line of defense a facility has is its employees," said Jack Moyer, deputy public utilities director at the City of Raleigh (N.C.) Public Utilities Department. "Without

employees being cognizant to lock doors, sophisticated locks are a wasted investment. Without someone monitoring video surveillance cameras (or a sophisticated automated system to do so), they are of little value."

About 1 million km (600,000 mi) of sanitary sewer line and 300,000 km

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