



**To:** FWEA Utility Council

**From:** David Childs

**Date:** September 5, 2025

**Re:** FDEP Proposes New Rules Easing Operator Reciprocity Requirements

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FDEP proposed for adoption the attached new rule implementing section [403.8721](#), Florida Statutes, which mandates that FDEP issue reciprocal operator licenses to individuals who:

- Are licensed water treatment, domestic wastewater treatment, or water distribution system operator licenses operators (or have comparable experience in the armed forces) in other U.S. jurisdictions,
- Have passed equivalent exams,
- Are not under disciplinary action,
- Submit appropriate documentation and fees,

As required by the statute, the law also includes provisions for temporary licensure and fee waivers during declared state emergencies

[Senate Bill 162 \(2023\)](#), established section 403.8721, Florida Statutes. That legislation was the top priority of the Florida Rural Water Association. The FWEA Utility Council supported the legislative initiative.

FDEP does not plan to conduct a rule adoption hearing, and we are not aware of any opposition to the proposed rule.

## Notice of Proposed Rule

### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

#### RULE NOS.: RULE TITLES:

- 62-602.200 Definitions
- 62-602.230 Approval of Residence or Correspondence Courses
- 62-602.250 Criteria for Determining Eligible Experience
- 62-602.300 Qualifications for Operator Licensure
- 62-602.360 Licensing Requirements for Non-Florida Operators
- 62-602.410 Applications for Examination
- 62-602.420 Applications for License
- 62-602.600 Fees for Operator Examinations and Licensure
- 62-602.650 Duties of Operators

**PURPOSE AND EFFECT:** Section 403.8721, Florida Statute (F.S.), directs the Department to adopt rules to implement licensure by reciprocity for water treatment, domestic wastewater treatment, and water distribution system operator licenses, and authorizes the Department to issue temporary operator licenses during a declared state of emergency. These changes will increase the licensed operator candidate pool in Florida by providing license by reciprocity to out-of-state licensed treatment plant operators and distribution system operators and allow for the issuance of temporary licenses for out-of-state licensed treatment plant operators and distribution system operators during a state of emergency declared pursuant to s. 252.36, F.S.

**SUMMARY:** The proposed amendments to Chapter 62-602, F.A.C., implement section 403.8721, F.S., to implement licensure by reciprocity for water treatment, domestic wastewater treatment, and water distribution system operator licenses and to authorize the Department to issue temporary operator licenses during a declared state of emergency. New definitions are proposed to be added, and the definition of “Domestic wastewater treatment plant” has been expanded. The incorporated reference manual for operator courses has been updated to the 2024 version, along with other reuse rule related updates. Outdated distribution system language has been removed from operator licensure qualifications. Licensing requirements to implement licensure by reciprocity have been detailed, including provisions for military applicants and temporary licenses during emergencies for out-of-state operators, in accordance with section 403.8721, F.S.

#### SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF ESTIMATED REGULATORY COSTS AND LEGISLATIVE RATIFICATION:

The Agency has determined that this will not have an adverse impact on small business or likely increase directly or indirectly regulatory costs in excess of \$200,000 in the aggregate within one year after the implementation of the rule. A SERC has not been prepared by the Agency.

The Agency has determined that the proposed rule is not expected to require legislative ratification based on the statement of estimated regulatory costs or if no SERC is required, the information expressly relied upon and described herein: there is no increase in fees for operator licensure and no financial impact on the general public.

Any person who wishes to provide information regarding a statement of estimated regulatory costs, or provide a proposal for a lower cost regulatory alternative must do so in writing within 21 days of this notice.

**RULEMAKING AUTHORITY:** 403.869, 403.871, 403.872, 403.8721, F.S.

LAW IMPLEMENTED: 403.182, 403.1832, 403.8533, 403.862(1)(c), 403.865, 403.866, 403.867, 403.869, 403.871, 403.872, 403.8721, 403.874, 403.875(1)(a), 403.876, 403.88, F.S.

IF REQUESTED WITHIN 21 DAYS OF THE DATE OF THIS NOTICE, A HEARING WILL BE SCHEDULED AND ANNOUNCED IN THE FAR.

THE PERSON TO BE CONTACTED REGARDING THE PROPOSED RULE IS: Chad Hardy Environmental Administrator

(850) 245-8396

Chad.Hardy@FloridaDEP.gov

2600 Blair Stone Road

M.S. 3506

Tallahassee, FL 32399

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, national origin, age, handicap, or marital status. Persons who require special accommodations under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) or persons who require translation services (free of charge) are asked to contact DEP's Limited English Proficiency Coordinator at 850-245-2118 or LEP@FloridaDEP.gov at least ten (10) days before the hearing. If you have a hearing or speech impairment, please contact the agency using the Florida Relay Service, 800-955-8771 (TDD) or 800-955-8770 (voice).

THE FULL TEXT OF THE PROPOSED RULE IS:

## **62-602.200 Definitions.**

For the purposes of this chapter, the following words, phrases, or terms shall have the following meaning:

(1) "Advanced Treatment Water Facility" has the same meaning as defined in Rule 62-565.200, F.A.C. Advanced treatment water facilities are permitted and classified by the Department under Chapter 62-565, F.A.C.

(2) "Approved County Health Department" means a county health department designated by the Department of Health and approved by the Department as having qualified sanitary engineering staff to perform the duties described in Broward, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Polk, Sarasota, or Volusia County Health Department pursuant to section 403.862(1)(c), F.S.

(2) through (6) renumbered (3) through (7) No change.

(8) "Domestic wastewater treatment plant" means any plant or other works used for the purpose of treating, stabilizing, or holding domestic waste. Such plants are permitted and classified by the Department under Chapters 62-600, 62-620 and 62-699, F.A.C.

(8) through (9) renumbered (9) through (10) No change.

(11) "Experience" means employment as an employee, volunteer, or contractor at a water or domestic wastewater treatment plant or advanced treatment water facility or electronic control system performing the duties described in subsections 62-602.250(1) and (2), F.A.C, or means employment as an employee, volunteer, or contractor on or for a water distribution system performing the duties described in subsection 62-602.250(7), F.A.C. Employment at an industrial treatment plant using water or wastewater treatment processes similar to those used at drinking water or domestic wastewater treatment plants will qualify as water or domestic wastewater

treatment plant operator experience and be approved by the Department if the criteria in subsection 62-602.250(3) or (4), F.A.C., are met.

(11) through (14) renumbered (12) through (15) No change.

(16) "Potable reuse" has the same meaning as defined in Rule 62-565.200, F.A.C.

(15) through (16) renumbered (17) through (18) No change.

(19) "Reciprocity" means a comprehensive evaluation or comparison of an active and valid license equivalent to the class or level of license being requested from a jurisdiction such as another state, the federal government, a territory, or tribal government, that has been designated as the primary agency by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, including the United States Armed Forces, to the requirements of a comparable Florida license listed in Rule 62-602.300, F.A.C., and applicable Department rules. This definition applies to reviews conducted between requirements of a specific Florida license class or level and one comparable active and valid license from another jurisdiction. The comprehensive comparison content consists of education, training, existing disciplinary actions, operational experience, examination content, and scores between licensure requirements listed in Rule 62-602.360, F.A.C.

(17) through (19) renumbered (20) through (22) No change.

(23) "Ward of the State" means any individual currently incarcerated by the Florida Department of Corrections. Wards of Federal correctional agencies and institutions, another state's correctional agencies and institutions or local city or county correctional agencies and institutions are not considered to be Wards of the State.

(20) through (21) renumbered (24) through (25) No change.

*Rulemaking Authority 403.869 FS. Law Implemented 403.182, 403.1832, 403.8533, 403.862(1)(c), 403.865, 403.866, 403.867, 403.869 FS. History—New 12-30-99, Amended 2-6-02, 10-15-07, xx-xx-xxxx.*

### **62-602.230 Approval of Residence or Correspondence Courses.**

Educational courses for training of operators shall be approved by type and class or level of training provided. The Department shall approve operator training courses that have a course content meeting Department standards as provided in DEP Form 62-602.230, Water, Wastewater, & Distribution Operator Knowledge Base Manual, the Department's Water, Wastewater, & Distribution Operator Knowledge Base Manual 2007, hereby adopted and incorporated by reference, effective September 30, 2025

(<http://flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-18520>). Copies of this document may be obtained from the Department of Environmental Protection, Operator Certification Program, Mail Station 3506, 2600 Blair Stone Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2400.

(1) Residence courses shall be approved for two years and can be re-approved upon request.

The application for approval of a residence course shall contain the following:

(a) through (b) No change.

(c) A statement that the course will meet Department standards as provided in DEP Form 62-602.230, Water, Wastewater, & Distribution Operator Knowledge Base Manual the Department's Water, Wastewater, & Distribution Operator Knowledge Base Manual 2007 for the type and class or level of the course offered; and,

(d) A statement of the qualifications, obligations, and responsibilities of the primary instructor. The primary instructor is responsible for developing or reviewing the course curriculum and ensuring the curriculum meets Department standards as provided in DEP Form

62-602.230, Water, Wastewater, & Distribution Operator Knowledge Base Manual the Department's Water, Wastewater, & Distribution Operator Knowledge Base Manual 2007. The primary instructor may have additional experts assist with or instruct areas of specialized training. Primary instructors shall sign all certificates of completion and notify the Department when a change occurs in the primary instructor of an approved course.

(2) No change.

(3) Approval for a correspondence course shall be for as long as the materials are current and applicable to the training needed by Florida operators. The Department shall review the materials every two years to determine if the course is current. Approval of correspondence courses only shall be granted by the Department for courses that meet the standards in DEP Form 62-602.230, Water, Wastewater, & Distribution Operator Knowledge Base Manual the Department's Water, Wastewater, & Distribution Operator Knowledge Base Manual 2007. The publisher or provider of a correspondence course shall submit copies of the text and materials, including tests, to the Department for approval. The application shall outline how the provider will interact with the student, how many lessons will be contained in the course, how much time the student is expected to spend on the course, how successful completion of the course will be indicated, and how frequently the course will be revised to reflect changing technology or new techniques of treatment. The provider of the course shall notify the Department when revisions are made and shall provide the Department with a copy of the revised materials.

(4) No change.

*Rulemaking Authority 403.869, 403.872 FS. Law Implemented 403.1832, 403.8533, 403.872 FS. History—New 2-6-02, Amended 10-15-07, xx-xx-xxxx.*

### **62-602.250 Criteria for Determining Eligible Experience.**

(1) through (5) No change.

(6) Experience in the treatment of potable reuse shall be counted as either drinking water or wastewater in accordance with the Department issued Advanced Treatment Water Facility Permit.

(6) through (8) renumbered (7) through (9) no change

*Rulemaking Authority 403.869, 403.872 FS. Law Implemented 403.1832, 403.8533, 403.865, 403.866, 403.867, 403.872 FS. History—New 12-30-99, Amended 2-6-02, 10-15-07, xx-xx-xxxx.*

### **62-602.300 Qualifications for Operator Licensure.**

(1) through (8) No change.

(9) In lieu of meeting the criteria in subsection (6), (7), or (8), above, applicants for a water distribution system operator license who meet the requirements listed in paragraph (a), (b), or (e), below, may apply for licensure to the Department before May 1, 2011.

(a) For licensure as a Level 3 water distribution system operator, the applicant must have received a high school diploma or its equivalent; have satisfactorily completed or instructed prior to October 15, 2007, one or more Department approved water distribution system operator training courses that addressed operation and maintenance of water distribution systems, totaled no less than 20 contact hours, and included a Department approved end-of-course exam; and document at least 1 year (2,080 hours) of experience as defined in subsection 62-602.250(7), F.A.C., or

~~(b) For licensure as a Level 2 water distribution system operator, the applicant must have received a high school diploma or its equivalent; have satisfactorily completed or instructed prior to October 15, 2007, one or more Department approved water distribution system operator training courses that addressed operation and maintenance and troubleshooting of water distribution systems, totaled no less than 40 contact hours, and included a Department approved end of course exam; and document at least 3 years (6,240 hours) of experience as defined in subsection 62-602.250(7), F.A.C.; or~~

~~(c) For licensure as a Level 1 water distribution system operator, the applicant must have received a high school diploma or its equivalent; have satisfactorily completed or instructed prior to October 15, 2007, one or more Department approved water distribution system operator training courses that addressed operation and maintenance and troubleshooting of water distribution systems and supervision of water distribution system personnel, totaled no less than 60 contact hours, and included a Department approved end of course exam; and document at least 5 years (10,400 hours) of experience as defined in subsection 62-602.250(7), F.A.C.~~

*Rulemaking Authority 403.869, 403.872 FS. Law Implemented 403.1832, 403.8533, 403.872 FS. History—New 12-30-99, Amended 2-6-02, 10-15-07, xx-xx-xxxx.*

### **62-602.360 Licensing Requirements for Reciprocity Non-Florida Operators.**

~~Operators licensed in other states must meet the following requirements to obtain a Florida license:~~

(1) Applications for reciprocity shall be made on DEP Form 62-602.360(1), Application for Reciprocity, hereby adopted and incorporated by reference, effective September 30, 2025 (<https://flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-18521>), and shall include all fees and documentation required by this chapter. Copies of this document may be obtained from the Department of Environmental Protection, Operator Certification Program, Mail Station 3506, 2600 Blair Stone Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2400. The Department shall issue a Florida operator license by reciprocity to any applicant who holds an active and valid license from another state, the federal government, a territory, or tribal government that has been designated as the primary agency by the United States Environmental Protection Agency when: Have a high school diploma or its equivalent;

(a) The applicant submits a completed DEP Form 62-602.360(1), Application for Reciprocity, as adopted in subsection 62-602.360(1), F.A.C., and any supporting documentation required to complete the review, and

(b) The applicant remits the application fee specified in Rule 62-602.600, F.A.C., and

(c) The applicant is not subject to any pending disciplinary or enforcement action relating to the licensing of water treatment, domestic wastewater treatment, or water distribution system, and

(d) The active and valid license from another state, the federal government, a territory, or tribal government has:

1. An education requirement of at least a high school diploma or its equivalent, and
2. An experience requirement that meets or exceeds the requirements of paragraphs 62-602.300(1)(b), (2)(b), (3)(b), or (4)(b), F.A.C., and
3. An examination requirement, which at a minimum requires a passing score of at least 70 percent, is proctored, closed book, and consists of at least 50 questions.

(2) The Department shall issue a Florida operator license by reciprocity to any applicant whose military occupation specialty (MOS) includes duties and responsibilities of a water treatment plant operator, water distribution system operator, or domestic wastewater treatment plant operator while serving in the United States Armed Forces, when: Have successfully completed a Department approved training course for the class or level of the license being requested no more than 5 years before the application;

- (a) The applicant submits a completed reciprocity application as adopted in subsection 62-602.360(1), F.A.C., and any supporting documentation required to complete the review, and
- (b) The applicant remits the application fees specified in Rule 62-602.600, F.A.C., and
- (c) The applicant is not subject to any pending disciplinary or enforcement actions relating to the performance of water treatment, domestic wastewater treatment, or water distribution systems, duties, and
- (d) The applicant holds a high school diploma or its equivalent, and
- (e) The duties performed under the applicant's MOS provide the experience necessary for treatment plant or distribution system operators in accordance with Rule 62-602.250, F.A.C., and are documented by one or more of the following:

1. Form DD 214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty,"
2. DD Form 2586 "Verification of Military Experience and Training,"
3. Joint Services Transcript,
4. A copy of the applicant's official military personnel file which denotes the applicant's assignments and duties,
5. Letter on official military letterhead, signed and dated by the applicant's Commander, that specifically identifies the applicant's MOS and length of military service in which the applicant served within the occupational specialty.

(f) The applicant has passed an examination or skills assessment that resulted in the formal award of a skill level or a certificate of completion from the applicant's formal military training or technical school. An applicant's license class or level under this chapter shall be determined based upon the highest skill level obtained.

(g) The applicant's total active military service shall be equivalent to the experience necessary for treatment plant and distribution system operator requirements under Rule 62-602.300, as follows:

1. 6 to 23 months of active military service equates to 750 experience hours,
2. 24 to 71 months of active military service equates to 2,080 experience hours,
3. 72 to 119 months of active military service equates to 6,240 experience hours,
4. Over 119 months of active military service equates to 10,400 experience hours.

(h) For retired or discharged applicants, the application must be made within five years from the date of discharge or retirement from the United States Armed Forces.

(3) If an applicant does not meet the requirements for licensure by reciprocity under paragraph (2), the Department shall award the applicant hours of eligible experience as follows: Have the required experience specified in Rule 62-602.300, F.A.C., for the class or level of license being requested;

(a) For MOSs in which the applicant has served actively for a minimum of 6 months and primary duties are within plumbing, electrical, mechanical, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, environmental engineering or environmental health disciplines, the applicant shall be awarded 750 hours of eligible experience.

(b) For all other MOSSs, applicants having actively served for a minimum of 6 months shall be awarded 500 hours of eligible experience.

(c) Hours of eligible experience shall be applied only once to a single license category.

(d) Must meet the requirements of Rule 62-602.270, F.A.C.

(4) During a state of emergency declared under section 252.36, F.S., persons who hold an active and valid water, domestic wastewater, or water distribution license from another state, the federal government, a territory, or tribal government that has been designated as the primary agency by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, may temporarily conduct activities or responsibilities of a Class C level drinking water or wastewater operator or Level 3 distribution system operator, under this Chapter, in accordance with the following: Possess an active license equivalent to the class or level of license being requested;

(a) Temporary authorization to conduct water, domestic wastewater, and water distribution system operations under this provision during a declared state of emergency shall expire in conjunction with the expiration date of or noted in the issued executive order from the Office of the Governor or coincide with the expiration date on the home state license, whichever is sooner.

(b) Temporary authorization to conduct water, domestic wastewater, and water distribution system operations under this provision is authorized only in the counties where a state of emergency has been declared by the executive order.

(c) In the event of overlapping declared states of emergency, the expiration date of the authorization under this provision may be adjusted or extended with the effective extension of any applicable executive order.

(d) Any public water system, domestic wastewater treatment plant, or water distribution system, which employs one or more person(s) under this provision, shall:

1. Verify the license type and status of the non-Florida operator with the appropriate authority.

2. Enter in the plant operation and maintenance log in a manner consistent with standard operating practice as defined in subsection 62-602.650(6), F.A.C., the operator's full name, license type, license level, license number, and original issuing authority.

3. Within 60 days of the date the employment or utilization of the non-Florida operator, submit notification to the Operator Certification Program, Mail Station 3506, 2600 Blair Stone Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2400, the operator's full name, address, phone number, license type, license level, license number, original issuing authority and license expiration date.

(5) Any water treatment, domestic wastewater treatment or water distribution system operator licensure issued by another state, federal government, territory, or tribal government based upon reciprocity, without an examination that meets the requirements of subparagraph 62-602.360(1)(d)3., F.A.C., shall not be eligible for reciprocity. Obtain a passing score on the licensing examination, as provided for in paragraph 62-602.550(1)(a), F.A.C., for the class or level of license being requested. For the purpose of obtaining a license, the examination will satisfy the examination criterion for licensing for a period of four years from the date a passing score is obtained.

*Rulemaking Authority 403.869 FS. Law Implemented 403.1832, 403.8533, 403.872 FS. History—New 2-6-02, Amended 10-15-07, xx-xx-xxxx.*

(1) Applications for treatment plant operator examinations shall be made on DEP Form 62-602.410(1), 62-602.900(2), "Application for Water or Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Examination," hereby adopted and incorporated by reference, effective September 30, 2025 (<https://flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-18522>) ~~10-15-07~~, and shall include all fees and documentation required by this chapter. Applications for water distribution system operator examinations shall be made on DEP Form 62-602.410(2), 62-602.900(4), "Application for Water Distribution System Operator Examination," hereby adopted and incorporated by reference, effective September 30, 2025 (<https://flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-18523>) ~~10-15-07~~, and shall include all fees and documentation required by this chapter. Copies of this document may be obtained from the Department of Environmental Protection, Operator Certification Program, Mail Station 3506, 2600 Blair Stone Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2400.

(2) through (3) No change.

*Rulemaking Authority 403.869, 403.872 FS. Law Implemented 403.872 FS. History—New 2-6-02, Amended 10-15-07, xx-xx-xxxx.*

#### **62-602.420 Applications for License.**

(1) Applications for treatment plant operator licenses shall be made on DEP Form 62-602.420(1), 62-602.900(1), "Application for Water or Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator License," hereby adopted and incorporated by reference, effective September 30, 2025 (<https://flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-18524>) ~~10-15-07~~, and shall include all fees and documentation required by this chapter. Applications for water distribution system operator licenses shall be made on DEP Form 62-602.420(2), 62-602.900(3), "Application for Distribution System Operator License," hereby adopted and incorporated by reference, effective September 30, 2025 (<https://flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-18525>), ~~10-15-07~~, and shall include all fees and documentation required by this chapter. Copies of this document may be obtained from the Department of Environmental Protection, Operator Certification Program, Mail Station 3506, 2600 Blair Stone Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2400.

(2) through (3) No change.

*Rulemaking Authority 403.869, 403.872 FS. Law Implemented 403.1832, 403.8533, 403.872 FS. History—New 2-6-02, Amended 10-15-07, xx-xx-xxxx.*

#### **62-602.600 Fees for Operator Examinations and Licensure.**

(1) through (2) No change.

(3) Applicants for reciprocity shall submit the following fees with the application. All application fees are non-refundable.

<u>Reciprocity Application</u>	<u>Application Fee</u>	<u>License Fee</u>
<u>Reciprocity License</u>	<u>\$50.00</u>	<u>\$50.00</u>
<u>United States Armed Forces</u>	<u>No Fee</u>	<u>No Fee</u>

(3) renumbered (4) No change.

(5)(4) To obtain a duplicate license or wall certificate, the licensee must submit a written request and pay \$25.00 for each duplicate requested.

(5) through (6) renumbered (6) through (7) No change.

*Rulemaking Authority 403.869 FS. Law Implemented 403.871, 403.872, 403.874 FS. History—New 12-30-99, Amended 2-6-02, Amended 10-15-07, xx-xx-xxxx.*

**62-602.650 Duties of Operators.**

(1) No change.

(2) Domestic wastewater treatment plant operators shall submit to the permittee all required reports in the manner required by the Department in Rule 62-600.680 ~~62-601.300~~, F.A.C. Water treatment plant operators shall submit to the supplier of water all required reports in the manner required by the Department in Rules 62-550.730, 62-555.325, and 62-555.350, F.A.C.

(3) through (5) No change.

*Rulemaking Authority 403.869 FS. Law Implemented 403.1832, 403.8533, 403.865, 403.875(1)(a) FS. History—New 12-30-99, Amended 2-6-02, 10-15-07, xx-xx-xxxx.*

NAME OF PERSON ORIGINATING PROPOSED RULE: Chad Hardy, Environmental Administrator

NAME OF AGENCY HEAD WHO APPROVED THE PROPOSED RULE: Alexis A. Lambert, Secretary

DATE PROPOSED RULE APPROVED BY AGENCY HEAD: July 23, 2025

DATE NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULE DEVELOPMENT PUBLISHED IN FAR: November 01, 2023