



# THE CERTIFIER

THE Newsletter for Environmental Certification Authorities

## Exam Development Series

The following is the first article in ABC's Exam Development Series which will highlight ABC's Testing Service, and discuss best practices for examination development.

### Raising the bar of ABC's Testing Services – Why is this so important?

ABC was created and exists solely as your program's resource, and we continue to believe you and others in our industry deserve the best standard setting organization. Early organization founders established ABC because they wanted to raise the bar, and with this process we intend to set it higher than ever.

As defined in ABC's Testing Service Update on page 3, ABC staff is partnering with Professional Testing, Inc. (PTI), a full-service provider of assessment and evaluation. PTI was chosen after considerable deliberation by the Board of Directors. With the area of psychometrics constantly changing, it is essential to stay abreast of the latest developments to maintain the highest standards. ABC's program has grown beyond any one

person's capacity, and the Board determined that a partnership with a group like PTI would strengthen the psychometrics of our testing service, while allowing our staff to focus on what we do best – work with our members, testing clients and volunteer subject matter experts.

While we've always had staff to provide psychometric services as a part of our Testing Service, ABC has never had a psychometrician on staff.

Our PTI partnership affords us not one, but a team of professional psychometricians to assist ABC's professional team in the development and improvement of our testing service. This unprecedented partnership will create an industry standard exam service that no other organization has or can recreate.

### Who is Professional Testing, Inc.?

PTI's Orlando, Fla. headquarters, and Tallahassee and the Metropolitan Washington D.C. area offices house a psychometric staff using a combination of proven psychometric methodologies in concert with the newest practices to create assessment solutions designed to reflect the highest industry standards.

PTI's team of psychometricians bring a long-standing history of building high quality examination programs for a wide variety of professional and occupational environments for local, state, national and international clientele.

Professional Testing experience ranges across industry sectors including financial  
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## ABC ANNOUNCES NEW OFFICE LOCATION

After closing the doors to its Ames office, staff are busy settling in to ABC's new space.

As of September 10, 2010, the doors of ABC's new office space are officially open. After saying goodbye to the city the Association has called home for over 30 years, all operations are now located in Ankeny, a city in the Des Moines metro area.

Paul Bishop, Chief Executive Officer, says the Association had outgrown its office, and staff are enjoying serving members, clients and volunteers from a larger, more centralized space.

The move to a new location is the continuation of unprecedented change for the dynamic international member organization which in the past two years restructured its Board of Directors and operations.

"Our new space has not only given us room to grow, but provided space more conducive to teamwork, ultimately benefiting our members," shared Bishop.

### New ABC Address

2805 SW Snyder Blvd., Suite 535  
Ankeny, IA 50023  
Phone: (515) 232-3623  
Fax: (515) 965-6827

### WHAT'S INSIDE

This edition of *The Certifier* holds the latest in certification news and events, including:

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## Celebrating ABC's Dedicated Volunteers

ABC Immediate Past-President Robert "Bob" Hoyt reflects on those serving an important role in the Association.



I remember an outside agency asking "how does ABC have a commitment of such highly professional volunteers?" I

recall thinking at the time, "why am I involved with ABC?"

My reasoning is probably similar to that of our other numerous members and volunteers: it all comes down to an enjoyment of working with such a diversified group of professionals from across North America, including our many Canadian friends. This level of commitment can be seen from the V&E committee members straight through the committees and the Board of Directors.

Leading by example and offering opinions when there is an opportunity, is important in an organization such as ABC. Our Association's founders have truly carved this path for today's members. A shining ex-

ample of volunteerism at its best, Harris Seidel, co-founder, has been technically retired for many years, but has answered the call of service each time a need arises, a fact that I am personally thankful for.

Something else I've experienced during my ABC involvement is watching an idea grow from a simple thought, to a success story. During a past ABC Annual Conference, EPA sponsored a regional certification officer workshop which discussed operator workforce. One of the bullet points jotted down by a participant was development of video to recruit young people into the water profession and provide additional exposure to the profession by funding internship programs.

Last year this came to fruition when EPA Region I developed a method to fund interns directly through the Massachusetts DEP using the ERG money for small systems. Massachusetts Water Works Association Executive Director Jennifer Pederson interviewed potential interns explaining the process and requirements under the program.

Water systems hired unpaid interns and the intern applied to Massachusetts DEP for a

grant covered under the ERG funds. Later EPA headquarters hired a crew to film the EPA Region I internship program as a method of exposing young people to the water profession.

The finished product included a group of film clips titled "Water You Waiting For?" available on EPA's website. Our treatment plant was selected as one of the locations to shoot the film and interview the interns. I also was asked to speak on the subject and became the poster child of the aging workforce in the film clips.

Beginning with an idea scribbled on a piece of paper at a workshop, it was eventually a reality many thanks to the volunteers who represent the pulse of what's happening in our industry, and are invaluable to ABC's success.

To volunteers new and old, thank you for your service, ideas and continued involvement. You are truly having a positive impact on your profession.

To view "Water You Waiting For?" visit [www.WorkForWater.org](http://www.WorkForWater.org).

## 2011 Conference to Include Water and Wastewater Keynote Address

Registration is now open for ABC's 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, *Making a Difference*, which will host water keynote David LaFrance, Executive Director, American Water Works Association and wastewater keynote Cordell Samuels, Water Environment Federation Board of Trustees.

One of the most comprehensive environmental certification conferences available for water and wastewater certification professionals, the event will be held Jan. 25-28, 2011 in Phoenix-Scottsdale, Ariz. The early bird registration deadline is December 16, 2010.

"The Conference Committee has been working to put together a technical program offering an array of professionals sharing their views and

experiences in certification," says Jenny Chambers, President-Elect and Conference Committee Chair.

Described as a "can't miss" comedian and captivating speaker, special guest Mark Mayfield will also address attendees during the opening day of the conference.

In addition, a break out session will be presented by Meghan Klasic, U.S. EPA.

Registration materials are available for download online, and will be sent to member programs in September.

**Conference sponsorship provided by: Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc. (AMP) and American Water Works Association.**

### 2011 Registration Rates

- > **Regulatory/Voluntary Program Member: \$400\*/\$450**
- > **V&E Committee Member: \$400\*/\$450**
- > **Associate Member: \$500\*/\$550**
- > **Non-member: \$630\*/\$680**

*\*Early bird rate valid until December 16, 2010*



## Making the Case for Continuing Education

**Brian Thorburn, ABC Validation & Examination Committee Council Director, provides an overview of continuing education, and describes his experiences guiding other operators through the process of obtaining CEUs.**

Continuing education is somewhat like adult education in that both involve furthering knowledge about any given topic. In water and wastewater, operators are encouraged to expand the technical knowledge of their expertise. Continuing education involves operators enrolling in courses either delivered face-to-face or by distance education.

### Numerous Benefits

While some operators may feel 'I've been doing this job for over 15 years and I know all that I need to know', others are more prone to embrace continuing education. As an operator engaged in water and wastewater for over 15 years, I continually realize there is always much more to learn. I've always felt that taking continuing education courses is beneficial to any operator in order to retain their certification, learn new technologies, and increase their experience.

I've often heard operators say no interesting courses are available, but visiting an online search engine and typing the words 'continuing education for water and wastewater operators' yields over 200,000 beneficial and educational results. These days there are near endless opportunities to continue educational pursuits and learn something new through distance education.

Obtaining CEUs through distance education has been around for continuing education for numerous years now. Years ago, the Sacramento State Water Program (now California State University) developed many courses for operators and were able to deliver these courses internationally. Many operators have had the privilege of taking one of the various courses offered by them.

Distance education can be done at work with an employer's permission. Many utilities will allow operators time during the day to work on these courses as it will save them travel costs to attend face-to-face courses. As well, distance education courses are usually much more economical than face to face courses.

### Continuing Education Review

As mentioned in the spring 2010 edition of *The Certifier*, ABC is actively working to complete development of a service reviewing continuing education courses for certifiers. Once completed, certification programs will have an in-depth subject matter expert review of courses submitted by trainers. ABC program members will be able to access an online database to see the reviews, and Associate members who have

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## New Logo Created for ABC Members

Members of ABC now have a new way to show their affiliation and membership with the Association with the official release of the ABC member logo.

Member of

**ABC**

Association of Boards of Certification

The design (shown below left) is free for web and print use by any program member. Use of this logo is not in any way an endorsement of any one program, but is solely recognition of membership with ABC.

No copyright is associated with the image which can be downloaded from the member side of [www.abccert.org](http://www.abccert.org).

For questions surrounding logo use, please contact ABC.

## Testing Service UPDATE

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVES TESTING DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In the last issue of *The Certifier*, you heard about several measures being taken to fortify the foundations of our V&E process and assist ABC in creating standard operating procedures so we conform to the highest psychometric standards. Specifically mentioned was a new partnership with Professional Testing Incorporated (PTI) and explanation of a focus on strengthening ABC's programs and the V&E process. You learned of our goal of utilizing our subject matter experts in the most efficient manner possible to maximize time and resources.

ABC developed a targeted testing development plan in partnership with PTI that was presented to the Board of Directors on June 19, 2010. The plan included scheduling of upcoming V&E committee meetings, webinars and teleconferences. The Board approved the plan which will hold meetings for the Water Treatment, Wastewater Treatment, Collection and Distribution Validation & Examination committees in January 2011. Meeting dates for Biosolids Land Application, Cross-Connection Control, Industrial Waste, Laboratory Analyst and Plant Maintenance have not yet been deter-

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services, government, education, corporate, healthcare, skilled trades, aviation and environmental health.

### What is a “psychometrician”?

Psychometricians practice the science of measurement, or psychometrics. The term psychometrics refers to the measurement of an individual’s psychological attributes, including the knowledge, skills, and abilities a professional might need to work in a particular job or profession. Teaming up with ABC’s testing staff and unique network of volunteer subject matter experts, PTI psychometricians are poised to assist us in strengthening our testing program.

### How will ABC’s relationship with PTI benefit your program?

ABC has partnered with a company with a breadth of experience and resources because we want to provide our member programs the highest quality of exams possible. While someone working in any area of testing may simply choose to call himself or herself a psychometrician, PTI’s staff has the background to thoroughly review every inch of our Testing Service and provide cutting-edge psychometric expertise as they work closely with ABC staff. Over the next few years, ABC staff in consultation with PTI will conduct job analyses, item writing process, score report development, and conduct re-

liability and validity studies. In addition, through this process we’re working to obtain the ANSI accreditation.

### What is ANSI accreditation?

To meet the ANSI accreditation standard, ABC’s Testing Service will need to undergo a thorough and detailed evaluation by the American National Standards Institute, an organization serving the U.S. private sector voluntary standardization system for more than 90 years.

ABC is working to obtain the ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024 certification standard of its programs within the next two years. Rigorous requirements must be met to join the elite list of ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024 accredited programs. We believe it isn’t enough to just say you meet or exceed their standards which are

the toughest in the industry, but we are instead striving to be accredited by such an esteemed organization.

### Looking Forward

A dedicated staff partnered with a strong team of psychometricians combined with inspiration from you, our members and volunteers are helping carry ABC to the next level. In the end, our ANSI accreditation will give you the confidence that ABC will be the only environmental certification organization not only holding itself to the highest standards but implementing those standards in every facet of our work.

We at ABC appreciate the opportunity to serve you and look forward working with you to better our program and yours. Thank you!

## Strategic Plan Initiatives

*At ABC’s June 18 Strategic Planning Committee Meeting, committee members reviewed exciting progress made by the Association in recent years.*

ABC’s current strategic plan, initially created in 2007 has served as a tool for the Board and members to strategically set and achieve goals and objectives, many of which have been successfully completed thanks to strong dedication from ABC’s members and volunteers.

During the June meeting, the committee reviewed the plan, celebrated Association accomplishments, focused on incomplete tasks and discussed major learnings.

“In addition to setting new goals and objectives, we also took a moment to celebrate how far ABC has come since our original plan was created,” shared Kim Dyches, Strategic Planning Committee Chair.

“We want other members and volunteers to join us in celebrating ABC’s collective progress.”

## Welcome New Members

ABC would like to welcome the following new Associate Members:

- CEU Plan
- Practical Applications
- H2O in Motion
- Klenzoid, Inc.

## Association Achievements

- Addition of Biosolids and Plant Maintenance certifications
- Improved governance structure
- Improved financial health
- Updated communications and branding
- Increase in use of computerized exams
- EPA Tribal Certification Program implementation
- Increased membership
- Increased focus on mission

## ABC Move Highlights



**Above:** A view outside ABC's new office space in Ankeny, Iowa. **Below left:** An updated conference room provides space for conference calls and staff meetings. **Below Right:** Looking down the hallway of the ABC headquarters.



**Left:** Following several days of moving, ABC staff are enjoying working in their new space. Pictured counterclockwise from left: Megan Baker, Project Manager; Ann Eddy, Exam Development Coordinator; and Kandace Heitland, Testing & Certification Coordinator. **Right:** Finance Director William Morrison unpacks one of many file boxes.

**ABC Move to New Office Space** - September 10, 2010; Ankeny, IA

**Board of Directors Meeting** - October 2, 2010; New Orleans, LA

**WEFTEC Technical Exhibition and Conference** - October 2-6, 2010; New Orleans, LA

**ABC Office Closed: Thanksgiving** - November 25-26, 2010

**Annual Conference Early Bird Registration Deadline:** December 16, 2010

**Board of Directors Meeting** - January 25, 2011; Phoenix, AZ

For the most current information, visit [ABC's Online Calendar >>](#)

## Class III Plant Maintenance Technologist Exam Available

ABC is now accepting applications for its Class III Plant Maintenance Technologist exam. Application materials and *Need-to-Know* Criteria are available for download online. Education and experience requirements, along with exam specifications, are listed below:

**Education** - High school diploma, GED, or equivalent

**Experience** - Five years of acceptable maintenance experience in a water or wastewater system with a minimum of two years performing Class III duties.

For more information, contact ABC.

EXAM SPECIFICATIONS	CLASS III
Operations & Maintenance	55%
Equipment Operations	5-10%
Preventive Maintenance	5-10%
Corrective Maintenance	15-20%
Predictive Maintenance	20-25%
Electrical & Instrumentation	15%
Math	15%
Safety & Administration	15%

(Continuing Education continued from page 3)

views, and Associate members who have courses for review will receive discounted rates. This service will provide valuable information for certification programs, and ultimately benefit the operators taking distance education courses.

### Encouraging Operators

In my experience both as an operator studying for continuing education courses and as a tutor for online correspondence water treatment courses, discipline is the key issue when it comes to distance education. Working on the course at work or at home requires an operator's time and determination. Some operators will start courses and will be too busy to finish them due to the requirements of work and personal time. Encouraging operators to set up a daily or weekly time to work on a distance education course can be essential to their success.

The topic of continuing education will no doubt continue to surface in conversations among certifiers. By sharing experiences and program differences, we can work together to continually advance the knowledge and expertise of operators.

*Brian Thorburn supervises a water treatment plant and water distribution system of a small utility on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.*

*He also tutors online and correspondence water treatment courses at a B.C. university. In addition, he has written college courses for water treatment and developed and facilitated workshops on water treatment and distribution. He serves as a V&E Council Director on ABC's Board of Directors, and is a Director of the B.C. Operator Certification Board.*

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terminated. Although this is a different V&E meeting cycle than in previous years, these are the first steps in creating a lasting legacy for ABC and its membership.

### Upcoming Job Task Analyses

Over the next several months, ABC will be completing Job Task Analyses for the Water Treatment, Wastewater Treatment, Collection, and Distribution disciplines. The Job Task Analysis (JTA) is ABC's first step in developing the standardized exams that will be released for member use in 2011. ABC will soon be calling on our members to help identify and encourage operators to complete JTA surveys. Your program's participation is critical to ensuring that the JTAs are as accurate and inclusive as possible.

### Staffing Update

Scott Harter, ABC's Director of Member Services, has accepted a position as the

treatment plant operator for the city of Nevada, Iowa, but will still be working with ABC's Testing Service as a contract subject matter expert throughout this and future projects.

### ABC Member Retirement

Betsy Beaver, Colorado Water and Wastewater Facility Operators Certification Board, retired August 31. ABC is grateful for her many years of service to the industry and ABC. We wish Betsy all the best in her retirement.