



TO: The Honorable Kim Reynolds, Governor and the Iowa General Assembly

FROM: Kayla Lyon, Director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

RE: **IAC-272C.4 DUTIES OF BOARD: “Home Base Iowa Act” Required Information and Statistics on Military Credit for DNR Drinking Water & Wastewater Operator Certifications.**

DATE: 12/01/2020

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources, DNR, through **IAC 567—81.1(455B) Chapter 81: Operator Certification: Public Water Supply Systems and Wastewater Treatment Systems**, sets out regulations for the certification of public drinking water supply and wastewater treatment operators and includes exam eligibility requirements, exam protocols, continuing education requirements, renewal and training requirements, reciprocity requirements and all corresponding fees.

In May of 2014 Governor Branstad signed the “Home Base Iowa Act” which required all professional and occupational licensing boards, commissions, and other authorities subject to Iowa Code chapter 272C to adopt rules on military service and veteran certification. These rules were to address the process under which each board would provide credit toward licensure qualifications for military service, education, and training and the procedures for expediting reciprocal licensure for veterans who are licensed in other states. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is the licensing board for the certification of drinking water and wastewater treatment operators (Iowa Code section 272C.1 (6)).

The Iowa Drinking Water and Wastewater Treatment Operator Certification Program recognized that veterans represent a major recruiting opportunity for the water and wastewater industry long before the Home Base Iowa Act was signed and had been working with the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the US Department of Labor (DOL), the Iowa Department of Education (DOE) and Provisions, a Professional Career Transition Company, since 2012 to recruit, train and assimilate them into our industry as quickly and seamlessly as possible.

Military experience typically gives veterans an understanding of teamwork, discipline, community and personal accountability that make them excellent members of the water and wastewater industry. In addition, many veterans already possess technical skills and training that are directly transferable to careers in the water sector. Iowa Department of Natural Resources had already been actively granting credit toward eligibility for industry relevant education, training, and service obtained or completed by an individual while serving honorably in the military forces.

In March of 2015, in response to the “Home Base Iowa Act”, DNR made changes to **IAC 567—81.1** codifying the process by which the Department provides credit toward licensure qualifications for military service, education, and training and the procedures for expediting reciprocal licensure for veterans who are licensed in other states. Many of these operators will hold certificates in not just one, but in two or all three operating categories: Drinking Water Treatment, Drinking Water Distribution and Wastewater Treatment.

A 2020 Reporting Year Success Story: we have an operator who is deployed via the National Guard but needs to upgrade the level of his certification because the head operator in the current system in Iowa in which he is employed by is going to retire as soon as the reservist returns from his deployment. The DNR Operator Certification Program arranged for the testing company to administer his exam remotely from somewhere in the

Middle East using his superior's laptop. Now, upon his return, he will be ready to immediately take over his system and the current operator in charge can retire; a seamless succession.

Five (5) operators, between December 1, 2019 and November 30, 2020, became certified in Iowa using credit toward licensure that came from experience and training obtained and documented during their military service.

Historical look at Required Reporting:

	4/1/2015 to 11/30/2016	12/1/2016 to 11/30/2017	12/1/ 2017 to 11/30/2018	12/1/2018 to 11/30/2019	12/1/2019 to 11/30/2020	Total
# of <u>Operators</u> utilizing Veteran Credit	44	22	15	10	5	96

- Forty-four (44) operators became certified in Iowa using credit toward licensure that came from experience and training obtained and documented during their military service between April 1, 2015 and November 30, 2016;
- Another twenty-two (22) between December 1, 2016 and November 30, 2017;
- Another fifteen (15) between December 1, 2017 and November 30, 2018;
- An additional ten (10) between December 1, 2018 through November 30, 2019; and
- Five (5) operators utilized their experience as veterans this reporting year.
- These ninety-six (96) operators collectively hold thirty-six (36) wastewater treatment certifications, forty-six (46) drinking water treatment certifications and forty-two (42) water distribution certifications.

These ninety-six (96) veteran drinking water treatment, water distribution and wastewater operators represent 3% of all currently certified operators. This is a significant contribution to the Drinking Water and Wastewater Treatment industries as a pragmatic, prolific workforce resource.