

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 IDNR Drinking Water & Wastewater Operator Certifications.**

DATE: 11/30/2024

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources, IDNR, 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 drinking water and wastewater treatment industry workforce long before the Home Base Iowa Act was signed and has been working with the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the US Department of Labor (DOL) and the Iowa Department of Education (DOE) 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 our Drinking Water and Wastewater Treatment Workforce. 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”, IDNR 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.**

Four (4) operators, between December 1, 2023 and November 30, 2024, became certified in Iowa using credit toward certification that came from experience and training obtained and documented during their military service.

Number of Drinking Water Treatment; Water Distribution and Wastewater Treatment Operators Utilizing Veteran Credit for Certification in Iowa:

4/2015 to 11/2016	12/2016 to 11/2017	2/2017 to 11/2018	12/2018 to 11/2019	12/2019 to 11/2020	12/2020 to 11/2021	12/2021 to 11/2022	12/2022 to 11/2023	12/2022 to 11/2024	Total:
44	22	15	10	5	6	13	5	4	124

- 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;
- Five (5) operators between December 1, 2019 through November 30, 2020;
- Six (6) between December 1, 2020 and November 30, 2021;
- Thirteen (13) between December 1, 2021 and November 30, 2022;
- Five (5) Veterans joining during the 2023 reporting period and
- Between December of 2023 and November of 2024 four (4) additional Veterans became certified and entered the Drinking Water and Wastewater Workforce with relevant experience.

These operators hold different combinations of types and grades of the following of Iowa's three certifications: Drinking Water Treatment; Drinking Water Distribution and Wastewater Treatment. Collectively they hold forty-nine (49) wastewater treatment certifications, sixty-one (61) drinking water treatment certifications and fifty-six (56) water distribution certifications.

All but three (3) of these one hundred and twenty-four (124) operators certified since 2015 are still active members of Iowa's drinking water and wastewater industry workforce; a workforce that has taken a hit over the last few years with operators taking early retirement on top of normal retirement cycles due to COVID. This represents 2% of all currently certified drinking water and wastewater treatment operators.

The ability to recruit and retain competent operators from a viable skilled labor pool is a significant contribution to Iowa's Drinking Water and Wastewater Treatment Industry as a pragmatic, prolific workforce resource.