

**SANTA YNEZ COMMUNITY SERVICES  
DISTRICT MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Loch Dreizler, General Manager  
**DATE:** March 18, 2026  
**SUBJECT:** Adoption of Updated Requirements for CWEA Collection System Maintenance Grade 1 Certification for Collection System Operators-In-Training (O.I.T.) and Existing Operators, Including Revised Job Description for Collection System Operator I

**Motion Required:** Staff recommends that the Board adopt the updated certification requirements and revised job description as presented, effective immediately upon approval. This includes a two-year timeline for new hires (from the date of hire) and existing operators (from the date of Board approval) to obtain CWEA Grade 1 certification, with potential extensions to ensure fairness.

**Staff Recommendation:** Approve the proposed changes to improve workforce professionalism and reduce legal risks.

**Purpose**

This memorandum builds on prior discussions, including the February 18, 2026 memo, and incorporates input from legal counsel. It establishes a mandatory requirement for Collection System Operators-In-Training (O.I.T.) to obtain CWEA Collection System Maintenance (CSM) Grade 1 certification within two years of hire to advance to full Operator I status. For existing operators, the two-year timeline will commence immediately upon Board approval of this policy.

Failure to obtain the required CWEA CSM Grade 1 certification within the two-year period—or within any approved extension, if applicable—will result in termination of employment. No exceptions will be made beyond formally approved extensions granted in advance under defined criteria.

The attached revised job description for Collection System Operator I incorporates these certification requirements and applies to all new hires effective immediately.

This policy is adopted to ensure all operators meet minimum competency standards essential for safe and effective District operations. Resources such as study materials and training opportunities remain available through standard District channels, but attainment of the certification within the required timeframe is non-negotiable.

## **Background**

- The District has long valued professional certifications to ensure high standards of safety, compliance, and service. The existing job description (dated July 1, 2012) already includes a two-year certification goal for new hires, supported by financial incentives.
- Following informal discussions and consultation with legal counsel, staff recommend formalizing this as a requirement with consequences to promote accountability. However, to address potential concerns about retroactive application, the policy includes case-by-case extensions, comprehensive support, and due-process protections.
- CWEA Grade 1 is an entry-level, voluntary credential that demonstrates foundational knowledge in collection system maintenance. No state mandate applies, but it aligns with the industry's best practices.
- For our existing operator, the two-year clock will start with Board approval, providing ample time. This ensures equitable treatment without undue hardship.

## **Workforce and Operational Impacts**

- **Recruitment:** The two-year timeline. It positions the District as a professional employer invested in growth.
- **Morale and Retention:** By prioritizing support over strict enforcement, we aim to boost pass rates and employee engagement. Grade 1 certification is achievable with preparation.
- **Benefits:** Certified staff improve safety, reduce risks like sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs), and enhance overall District performance.

## Recommended Path Forward

After legal review, staff proposes a balanced implementation that is legally defensible through clear communication, support mechanisms, and flexibility:

- **Certification Requirement:** All O.I.T.s and existing operators must obtain CWEA Grade 1 within two years (from hire date for new employees or Board approval for current ones). Failure to comply will lead to termination.
- **Retain and Strengthen Financial Incentives:** Continue pay differentials for certified staff to reward achievement.
- **Provide Some Study Support:**
  - Allow reasonable on-duty study time (no more than 2 hours a week, 3 months before the exam).
  - Celebrate certifications publicly to foster a positive culture.

This framework minimizes risks of claims related to fairness or constructive discharge by emphasizing investment in employees.

## Summary of Other Key Considerations

1. **No State Mandate Applies:** CWEA certification remains voluntary but internally required for progression. Enforcement is a District policy.
2. **Retroactive Application to Current Employees:** By starting the clock now and offering extensions/support, we avoid perceptions of arbitrariness.
3. **Risk of Union Interest:** A supportive rollout reduces job insecurity concerns. Similar agencies have successfully implemented requirements without unionization by focusing on development.

**Attached:** Revised Job Description for Collection System Operator I (effective for new hires – **see highlighted area below**).

## **Revised Job Description**

### **SANTA YNEZ COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT JOB DESCRIPTION**

#### **COLLECTION SYSTEM OPERATOR 1**

This is not an individualized job description for any particular employee. It defines the general character and scope of responsibilities. It is not intended to describe and does not necessarily list every duty for a position.

#### **GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

Under the direction of the Operations Supervisor and Collection System Operator II, perform semi-skilled labor in the maintenance, operation, repair, and related service activities for the District collection system; and perform a variety of related duties as assigned. New hires may begin as Operators-In-Training (O.I.T.) and are expected to progress to full Collection System Operator I status upon meeting certification requirements.

#### **EXAMPLES OF DUTIES**

- Maintain collection system lines and pump stations.
- Participate in the operation of line locating, line cleaning, and video inspection equipment.
- Perform preventative maintenance on trucks and other related equipment.
- Order supplies, materials, and equipment.
- Read meters daily and record.
- Understand and practice safe work practices and requirements, including chemical handling, confined space work, and construction of underground requirements of OSHA.
- Regularly monitor system through reading gauges, meters, and control panels.
- Daily visual inspection of collection system.
- Mark for underground alerts and work with construction personnel.
- Comply with District's employment policies as set forth in the Employee Handbook.
- Work cooperatively with others and readily accept instructions and directions from a supervisor or the General Manager.
- Maintain cordial working relationships with other District employees; work easily in a setting that may include distractions and noise.

## **ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS**

- Understand and employ materials and equipment used in construction, general mechanical and electrical operations, maintenance, and repair.
- Understand and employ safe work practices.
- Skills necessary to learn the operation and maintenance of a variety of collection system/wastewater equipment.
- Skills are necessary to learn to read meters and gauges correctly and to act quickly and competently.
- Skills necessary to learn to make routine adjustments and minor repairs to motors, pumps, and other equipment.
- Ability to work in confined space.
- Periodically wear breathing apparatus as required for confined space entry.
- Carry a cell phone while on standby duty, which is a 14-day 24-hour rotation.
- Respond to a call-out within 30 minutes of the call, while on standby duty.
- Personal schedule permitting working weekends, holidays, various shifts, as assigned.
- Maintain the Grease Trap Program.

## **Certification**

Possession of the skills and knowledge necessary to pass the CWEA Collection System Maintenance (CSM) Grade 1 certification exam and obtain certification within two years of hire (or Board approval date for existing employees). This two-year timeline is mandatory and non-extendable except in rare, documented cases of severe hardship. Any such exception must be requested in writing in advance, supported by verifiable medical or equivalent documentation, reviewed by the General Manager, and granted only if it does not impose undue hardship on District operations. Extensions beyond the two-year period will not exceed 6 months and are granted solely at the District's discretion with no guarantee of approval. Failure to obtain the CWEA CSM Grade 1 certification within the two-year period will result in termination of employment. No other exceptions, waivers, reassignment, demotion, or alternative paths will be considered or granted. This requirement ensures all employees meet the essential competency standards for safe and effective performance of Collection System Operator duties.

**WORKING CONDITIONS**

Work in wastewater collection system, wastewater treatment plant environments; some exposure to wastewater, water, chemicals, hazardous materials, and noise; heavy lifting/moving, standing, climbing. May work at heights, in confined spaces, and in inclement weather conditions.

**PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to use hands to finger, handle, feel or operate objects, tools, or controls and reach with hands and arms. The employee frequently is required to stand, sit, walk, push, pull, kneel, stoop, bend, and squat. The employee must frequently lift and/or move up to 25 lbs and infrequently up to 50 lbs. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, depth perception, and the ability to adjust focus. Each of these physical tasks is an essential function of the position.

**LICENSE REQUIREMENTS**

Must possess a valid California Class C driver's license, have a satisfactory driving record, and be insurable by the District to operate District vehicles.

**EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE**

Any combination of experience and training that would likely provide the required knowledge and abilities is qualifying. Equivalent to completion of the twelfth grade. Experience in sewer operations is desirable.

This is to acknowledge that I have received a copy of this job description and understand its contents.

Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_