

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to water and wastewater facility
 3 operators; amending s. 403.865, F.S.; revising
 4 legislative findings and intent; amending s. 403.867,
 5 F.S.; conforming a provision; creating s. 403.8721,
 6 F.S.; requiring the Department of Environmental
 7 Protection to issue water treatment plant operator
 8 licenses, water distribution system operator licenses,
 9 and domestic wastewater treatment plant operator
 10 licenses by reciprocity to certain applicants;
 11 providing licensure requirements; authorizing the
 12 department to issue temporary operator licenses during
 13 a declared state of emergency; requiring the
 14 department to the waive application fee for temporary
 15 operator licenses; providing an effective date.

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 17 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
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19 Section 1. Section 403.865, Florida Statutes, is amended
 20 to read:

21 403.865 Water and wastewater facility personnel;
 22 legislative purpose.—

23 (1) The Legislature finds that:

24 (a) Water and wastewater services are essential to the
 25 health and well-being of all citizens.

26 (b) Water and wastewater facility personnel are essential
 27 first responders.

28 (c) The threat to the public health and the environment
 29 from the operation of water and wastewater treatment plants and
 30 water distribution systems mandates that qualified personnel
 31 operate these facilities.

32 (2) It is the ~~legislative~~ intent of the Legislature that
 33 any person who performs the duties of an operator and who falls
 34 below minimum competency or who otherwise presents a danger to
 35 the public be prohibited from operating a plant or system in
 36 this state.

37 Section 2. Section 403.867, Florida Statutes, is amended
 38 to read:

39 403.867 License required.—A person may not perform the
 40 duties of an operator of a water treatment plant, water
 41 distribution system, or ~~a~~ domestic wastewater treatment plant
 42 unless he or she holds an active and valid operator ~~a current~~
 43 ~~operator's~~ license issued by the department under s. 403.872 or
 44 s. 403.8721.

45 Section 3. Section 403.8721, Florida Statutes, is created
 46 to read:

47 403.8721 Requirements for licensure by reciprocity.—

48 (1) The department shall issue a license by reciprocity to
 49 any applicant who:

50 (a) Is a water treatment plant operator, water

51 distribution system operator, or domestic wastewater treatment
52 plant operator and holds an active and valid license from
53 another state, the federal government, a territory or tribal
54 government that has been designated as the primary agency by the
55 United States Environmental Protection Agency, or any unit
56 thereof for which the licensure requirements, including
57 education and operational experience, are comparable to or
58 exceed the licensure requirements of s. 403.872.

59 (b) Has passed a licensure examination comparable to the
60 licensure examination of the department, subject to approval by
61 the department.

62 (c) Is not the subject of a disciplinary or enforcement
63 action outside this state at the time of application for
64 reciprocal licensure.

65 (d) Submits a completed application for reciprocal
66 licensure and any required supporting documentation.

67 (e) Remits the application fee.

68 (2)(a) The department shall issue a license by reciprocity
69 to any applicant who:

70 1. Has performed duties comparable to a water treatment
71 plant operator, water distribution system operator, or domestic
72 wastewater treatment plant operator while serving in the United
73 States Armed Forces for which the requirements for performing
74 the duties, including education and operational experience, are
75 comparable to or exceed the licensure requirements of s.

76 403.872.

77 2. Has passed a skill assessment or competency examination
 78 comparable to the licensure examination of the department,
 79 subject to approval by the department.

80 3. Is not the subject of a disciplinary or enforcement
 81 action at the time of application for reciprocal licensure.

82 4. Submits a completed application for reciprocal
 83 licensure and any required supporting documentation.

84 5. Remits the application fee.

85 (b) If an applicant does not meet the requirements for
 86 licensure under this subsection, the department shall award
 87 education and operational experience credits for licensure under
 88 s. 403.872.

89 (3) During a declared state of emergency, the department:

90 (a) May issue a temporary water treatment plant operator
 91 license, water distribution system operator license, or domestic
 92 wastewater treatment plant operator license by reciprocity to
 93 any applicant who meets the requirements of subsection (1) or
 94 subsection (2).

95 (b) Shall waive the application fee for a temporary
 96 operator license under this subsection.

97 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.