

LIMITED-SCOPE AUDIT PROPOSAL

Evaluating the State's Water Systems and Wastewater Operator Certification Program

SOURCE

This audit proposal was requested by Representative Jim Minnix.

BACKGROUND

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) is responsible for administering the state's water supply and wastewater treatment certification program. Water supply systems are the facilities, pipes, and other infrastructure used to distribute drinking water to the public. Wastewater facilities remove sewage and other contaminants from water that has been used by homes, businesses, etc., before it's rereleased into the environment. State law requires that all water supply systems and wastewater treatment facilities are supervised by a certified water operator. Individuals must obtain on-the-job experience and pass an exam to become certified in the state. KDHE administers the state's water systems and wastewater treatment exam. The exam is offered at specific times and locations throughout the year. There is also a \$25 fee to take the exam.

House Bill 2633 was introduced during the 2024 Legislative Session. The bill would allow the Secretary of KDHE to deposit the certification fees into the Water Program Management Fund. Currently, these fees are deposited into the State General Fund. Proponents of the bill said the current exam is outdated and difficult to pass. KDHE officials said they would consider using the fee revenue to contract with a national testing agency. Officials explained the national exam has more current content. It is also possible the national exam would be offered more frequently and, in more locations, than the current exam.

Legislators are interested in knowing more about the exam process, including testing results from 2023.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES AND TENTATIVE METHODOLOGY

The audit objectives listed below are the questions we would answer through our audit work. The steps listed for each objective convey the type of work we would do. These may change as we learn more about the audit issues.

Objective 1: What were the results of the water system and wastewater treatment certification exams in 2023? Our tentative methodology would include the following:

- Talk to KDHE officials to understand more about the current exam, including the last time it was updated.
- Review KDHE records to identify how many times the certification exam was offered in 2023. This would also include the location of the exams.

- Review KDHE certification data to summarize exam results for 2023. This would include the number of people who took the exam, the number that passed, and the number that failed.
- Research national testing agencies to understand how they operate and differ from the state's current exam.

ESTIMATED RESOURCES

We estimate this audit would require 100 staff hours to complete.