

Irrigator Advisory Council (IAC) Minutes

Date: Thursday, August 6, 2020

Time: 9:00am

Location: Due to COVID-19, this meeting was held remotely via teleconference call.

Call to Order

Mr. Micah Reed

Mr. Micah Reed, IAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. Elizabeth Vanderwerken introduced herself and provided discussion guidelines to help minimize communication issues during the teleconference.

The present members of the council introduced themselves: Mr. Micah Reed, Mr. David Moulton, Mr. Phillip Hathaway, Mr. Mark Warden, Mr. Robert Evans, Mr. Brooke Furrh, Mr. Charles Swanson, Ms. Donna Starling, Ms. Valerie Miller.

TCEQ staff also introduced themselves: Ms. Elizabeth Vanderwerken, Ms. Chelsea Atkinson, Ms. Jaya Zyman, Mr. Peter Abel, Ms. Shannon Watson, Ms. Katherine McGlaughlin, Mr. James Murphy. Mr. Shannon Frazier and Ms. Marilyn Gates joined later in the meeting.

The members of the public were asked to introduce themselves before speaking, and were instructed to email Ms. Chelsea Atkinson as part of attendance taking procedures for the meeting.

Approval of the Minutes from Previous Meeting

Any comments on the minutes from the previous meeting held on February 6, 2020 were requested. Mr. Micah Reed commented that the council had not been given an opportunity to review the February 6, 2020 IAC Meeting Minutes. Ms. Chelsea Atkinson commented that the meeting minutes for the February 6, 2020 IAC meeting were posted to the IAC page on the TCEQ website. Mr. Micah Reed moved to defer approval of the February 6, 2020 IAC Meeting Minutes until the end of the council meeting.

At the end of the council meeting, no further no comments were received, Mr. David Moulton made a motion to approve the minutes. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Brooke Furrh and the vote to adopt the minutes was unanimous.

TCEQ Landscape Irrigation Program

Mr. Peter Abel

Mr. Peter Abel, TCEQ Landscape Irrigation Program (LIP), gave program updates and briefly talked about the complaints received. Mr. Alfonso Fuentes has moved to a different position within the

Agency. Mr. Shannon Frazier, the new Technical Programs Work Leader, has been selected to take Mr. Fuentes's place in overseeing the TCEQ LIP.

Mr. Peter Abel also briefly talked about the complaints received. Since the last IAC meeting in February, the TCEQ has received 20 new incidents, have opened 13 investigations, and has approved 4 investigations. The most common complaints continue to be related to advertising. Mr. Abel commented that despite difficulties from COVID-19, investigations are proceeding as normal.

TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Program

Ms. Katherine McGlaughlin

Ms. Katherine McGlaughlin, TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Program Coordinator, provided an update on the activities of his program. Staff continue to conduct on-site Cross-Connection Control Program Surveys. One of the many topics covered during these surveys is Landscape irrigation. Staff are also still taking suggestions for Public Water Supplies that need Cross-Connection Control Programs.

The next meeting of the TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Subcommittee will be September 3, 2020. For more information please visit the website at: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/cross-connection>.

The TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Program also gave a presentation during the TCEQ Public Drinking Water Virtual Conference that was held during August 4-5, 2020. Copies of the presentation will be made available online.

Occupational Licensing

Ms. Shannon Watson

Ms. Shannon Watson, Section Manager TCEQ Occupational Licensing, provided statistics on pass fail rates and licenses issued.

Fiscal Year 2020
Landscape Irrigator Program Results
2nd Quarter (December 1, 2019 – February 29, 2020)

	Tests Administered	Tests Passed	Percent Passed	Licenses Issued (Renewals included)	Total Current Licenses
Landscape Irrigation Inspector	3	2	66.7%	5	82
Landscape Irrigation Technician	113	52	46%	97	1,459
Landscape Irrigator	282	164	58.2%	632	6,865
Totals	398	218	54.8%	734	8,406

Spanish vs English	Tests Administered	Tests Passed	Percent Passed

Landscape Irrigation Technician - English	90	45	50%
Landscape Irrigation Technician - Spanish	23	7	30%

Fiscal Year 2020
Landscape Irrigator Program Results
3rd Quarter (March 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020)

	Tests Administered	Tests Passed	Percent Passed	Licenses Issued (Renewals included)	Total Current Licenses
Landscape Irrigation Inspector	2	2	100%	9	81
Landscape Irrigation Technician	27	13	48.1%	53	931
Landscape Irrigator	105	56	53.3%	570	6,751
Totals	134	71	53%	632	8,258

Spanish vs English	Tests Administered	Tests Passed	Percent Passed
Landscape Irrigation Technician - English	20	12	60%
Landscape Irrigation Technician - Spanish	7	1	14%

Ms. Watson also spoke on the challenges of administering exams during the beginning months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March, several Computer-based Testing Locations for Occupational Licensing exams have opened back up, and TCEX is offering 8-hour exams to Landscape Irrigators. All landscape irrigation exams should still be available. Ms. Watson also explained that due to complications from the shutdown, the expiration date on all licenses expiring from March through August have been extended by 30 days. There are no planned extensions for licenses expiring in September. More information on the TCEQ's response can be found on the [COVID-19 response page](#) on the TCEQ website. Any questions on the topic of licenses and license renewals should be emailed to Licenses@tceq.texas.gov.

Ms. Watson added that training providers of Landscape Irrigation and Irrigation Technician courses will need to update their training manuals. Training providers have 180 days to submit their training materials for review to Occupational Licensing.

Interim Charge Survey

Ms. Chelsea Atkinson

Ms. Chelsea Atkinson, TCEQ Landscape Irrigation Program (LIP), briefly described the Interim Charge received by the TCEQ, and spoke to how the TCEQ LIP responded by sending a survey to local cities,

municipalities, and public water suppliers. The survey is intended to gather information on the use and regulation of backflow prevention assemblies within the state to fulfill the Interim Charge. The survey was sent out starting on June 26th, 2020 and was sent to 8,171 individuals. As of Wednesday, August 4th, 2020, we have only received 147 responses. Ms. Atkinson urged those who had received the survey to respond to it before the deadline on August 30, 2020.

Mr. Shannon Frazier added that the survey was not sent to irrigators or private water suppliers, and that it was sent to more than one person in each city, municipality, or public water supplier with the intention the survey would be sent to the person/people who would be able to answer the survey. Mr. Brooke Furrh expressed concerns over the whether or not this would get the amount of responses the TCEQ was seeking, and offered to help us with suggestions in how to get more responses.

Chapter 344 Rules Update and Adoption

Mr. Shannon Frazier

Mr. Shannon Frazier, Work Leader TCEQ Landscape Irrigation Program (LIP), provided information on the updated Chapter 344 Rules governing Landscape Irrigation in Texas. Mr. Frazier highlighted a few topics of interest on the rules change, specifically pointing out the Commission's determination that not all landscape irrigation systems shall be classified as health hazards. Mr. Frazier explained that cities may adopt more stringent regulations than that the TCEQ minimum requirements.

Mr. Adam Smith, city of Austin, commented that all irrigation systems should be classified as health hazards. Mr. Frazier restated that the TCEQ determined that a change was not feasible without enough supporting data, and added that the Interim Charge survey was made to gather that data for a Legislature's Committee on Environmental Regulation to determine if residential and commercial backflow assemblies are adequately regulated. Mr. Jerry Lewis commented that if data was skewed at the beginning of the process, the results would also be skewed. Mr. Lewis also stressed the importance of filling out the comments section on backflow testing reports so that such data is provided to water suppliers. Mr. Frazier agreed, commenting that there needs to be evidence looking at costs and health reporting based on known backflow events.

Rule Implementation and IAC's Role

Mr. Micah Reed

Mr. Micah Reed requested questions to focus on what they could do to assist the TCEQ in rule implementation. Mr. Shannon Frazier stated that he wanted suggestions from the IAC on how best the TCEQ could do outreach. Mr. Reed stated that webinars and Teams meetings might be good. Mr. Brooke Furrh suggested that IAC meetings be held over Zoom. Ms. Tammy Swor suggested Facebook Live as an option, citing upwards of 3000 people watching virtually once a local authority in his area switched to Facebook Live due to COVID-19 concerns. Mr. Frazier stated he would check with TCEQ's legal team to consider this move. Mr. Frazier also added that the TCEQ LIP was working on revising the RG-470 with the Chapter 344 rule changes. Mr. Reed stated that he will reach out to the IAC council for further outreach suggestions.

Industry Updates to Installation

Mr. Brooke Furrh

Mr. Brooke Furrh noted that some of the manufacturer's manuals have changed to allow double-check valve assemblies and RPZs to be installed in-ground if certain criteria were met. Mr. Reed agreed with

the manufacturer's change to double-check valve assemblies, stating that the manuals previously only allowed above-ground installation. Mr. Frazier commented that the USC manual allows DCVAs to be installed in a vault if they had appropriate test clearance, but added that RPZs should never go in vaults because of a submergence risk.

Discuss Video Conferencing Options for Future Meetings

Mr. Shannon Frazier

Mr. Shannon Frazier stated that the TCEQ wanted to ensure that people had Microsoft Teams capability before we held a meeting online over Teams. Mr. Frazier added that the next meeting would be held over Microsoft Teams.

Individuals Wishing to Address the Council

No individuals wished to address the council on any further topics.

Adjournment

Mr. Charles Swanson made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Phillip Hathaway seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 am.