

NGA Update on OQ Testing in Wake of COVID-19

March 17, 2020

The Northeast Gas Association (NGA) has determined that effective at the close of business today, March 17, 2020, online Operator Qualification testing and NGA-delivered OQ performance evaluations have been suspended in light of the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic.

NGA was notified this morning that Prometric has made the decision to suspend operations at all Prometric test centers in the U.S. and Canada. Prometric will be notifying onsite test centers and candidates registered at brick-and-mortar centers directly. We expect this shut down to be one month or longer in duration. NGA supports this decision.

Following the Prometric announcement, NGA likewise made the decision to suspend NGA-delivered performance evaluations.

NGA reminds operators and contractors that the OQ plan includes a 3-month grace period. The specific section of our plan is referenced below.

6.7 *Subsequent Qualification Intervals*

(b) Subsequent qualification intervals allow for a 3-month evaluation grace period, except as noted below. For example, individuals qualified on tasks with a 1-year subsequent qualification interval shall re-qualify within 1 year, but not to exceed 15 months. Individuals qualified on tasks with a 3-year subsequent qualification interval shall re-qualify within 3 years, but not to exceed 39 months.

Exception: The 3-month grace period does not apply to the welding skill assessment.

Note: An individual will not show as qualified in the Learning Management System (LMS) while in the grace period. Operators and contractors should consider alternative means to demonstrate that an individual is working within the grace period, such as carrying a hard copy of their qualification transcript or availability of office personnel to validate qualifications in the database.

NGA suggests that membership review their current plan and overall personnel requalification status for planning purposes in the event this suspension of service goes beyond anticipated timeframes, so that alternate plans can be considered if necessary.

NGA will continue to work with Federal and State regulators in seeking appropriate long-term regulatory relief as warranted by this pandemic.

NGA and its committees will continue to monitor updates on Coronavirus and communicate any changes to the suspension of OQ services and time frames.

We strongly believe this decision is the right decision for all involved. It is intended that these actions will assist in mitigating the spread of the virus and help ensure the safety of NGA evaluators, member companies and their families.