

Gas Operator Qualification Membership (Updated Dec. 3, 2018) Process & Frequently Asked Questions

PROCESS

Step 1:

Licensee (employer firm) applies for membership in the Plumbing Foundation's Gas Operator Qualification program. Licensee essentially "sponsors" qualified employees seeking to obtain Operator Qualification (OQ). The cost is an annual flat fee per person. There may be additional costs associated with training but which are not charged by the Plumbing Foundation.

Step 2:

All seeking OQ must pass a pre-employment drug test which will be coordinated by Clarity Testing through the Plumbing Foundation.

Step 3:

Obtain required OQ training, more information below. The Foundation will coordinate the scheduling of the OQ training.

Step 4:

Pass the written examinations and practical examination, more information below. The Foundation will coordinate the scheduling of the OQ exams.

Step 5:

After successfully completing steps 1-4, successful candidates will be issued a QR card. Provided that the qualified person maintains employment with an active NYC licensed master plumber and they follow all of the requirements of membership in the Plumbing Foundation OQ program, they will be permitted to do this work.

Note: This membership is available for NYC Licensed Master Plumbers and their qualified employees only.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

All persons interested in obtaining USDOT Jurisdictional Operator Qualification for Task 86 and Task 87 should understand all of the requirements necessary to achieve this status. We have assembled a list of frequently asked questions. If after reading this section you still have additional questions please contact us via email at **GOQmembership@plumbingfoundation.nyc**. Please do not call the office. All calls related to OQ questions will be referred to the website. If you email us regarding a question, please reference the page number of this document and the specific question number. We have done our best to make this list as inclusive as possible, but realize that there may be some issues that have not been identified. We will make changes to this section as required, which will be updated on an ongoing basis and published on the Plumbing Foundation's website at: **www.plumbingfoundation.nyc/membership**. Please ensure that you are reviewing the most updated version. Questions emailed shall be responded to as soon as possible. If necessary, someone from our office will contact you directly.

1. **What is *DOT jurisdictional gas piping*?** As used in the Gas Operator Qualification membership application, documents, and explanatory materials, "DOT jurisdictional gas piping" is defined as all visibly accessible interior building piping, fittings, and appurtenances (meters, pressure regulators, filters, meter bars, and transition piping) regulated by the federal Department of Transportation (DOT) from the point of entry (POE/wall penetration) through the outlet of the meter. This definition is from the Northeast Gas Association's (NGA) Operator Qualification Covered Task List. **Note:** For exterior building piping, both exposed and buried piping, NYS has extended the definition of DOT Jurisdictional Gas Piping to include piping from the outlet of the meter to where the piping enters the building.

2. **What are Covered Tasks 86 and 87?**
 - a. Covered Task 86 (Conducting Interior Jurisdictional Piping Safety Inspections): Conduct interior jurisdictional piping safety inspections, including identification of abnormal operating conditions (AOCs), inspecting for atmospheric corrosion, and performing leak surveys. This description is from NGA's Operator Qualification Covered Task List.

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- b. Covered Task 87 (Conducting Interior Jurisdictional Piping Construction and Maintenance Activities): Interior jurisdictional piping construction and maintenance activities conducted (in NYC) by operator-qualified Licensed Master Plumbers (LMPS), operator-qualified technicians working under LMPs, or operator-qualified utility personnel. This description is from NGA's Operator Qualification Covered Task List.
3. **I am an NYC licensed master plumber. Am I exempt from this training?** NO, as long as the LMP performs work covered by Tasks 86 and/or 87, he/she must be OQ'd and part of a drug and alcohol program compliant with the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA).
4. **What experience does my employee need to participate in this program?** The training provided for this particular operator qualification is specialized enhanced safety training. Task 87 Candidates will be required to have prior knowledge of fuel gas pipe system repair, installation, and maintenance. The training for this task is limited to the specific requirements listed. Task 86 training will include performing leak surveys, corrosion surveys, recognizing and responding to abnormal operating conditions, and purging gas piping systems in and out of service. All candidates are expected to have a familiarity with gas operations. As the licensee you will be sponsoring the candidate and attesting to their experience level and employment with your firm. If it is discovered any false statements or fraudulent information has been provided, your firm may be dropped from the program. In addition, you will be reported to the NYC Department of Buildings.
5. **Can I only have a journeyman (mechanic) certified and send a non-operator qualified helper with them?** No. Anyone working on Task 86 or Task 87 must hold the Operator Qualification.
6. **How do I obtain qualifications for myself or my employees?** Complete the attached application form and use the checklist to ensure you follow instructions.
7. **Do I have to be a full member of the Plumbing Foundation?** No, the GOQ membership is a separate membership specifically for obtaining operator qualification in Tasks 86 and 87 and is open to the entire industry. However, if interested, please contact the Plumbing Foundation at info@plumbingfoundation.nyc to receive the application for full membership.

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8. **Can I sign up my company now and only complete Attachment A and sign up my employees at a later date?** No. All applications for GOQ membership into the Plumbing Foundation must include at least one participant. Subsequent participants can be added by submitting Attachments B and C for additional employees.
9. **Why do I need Attachment B?** Participation in this program requires compliance with PHMSA drug and alcohol testing requirements as listed in 49 CFR Part 199 and 40. The template in Attachment B meets those requirements.
10. **Who should be the Designated Employee Representative for the purpose of receiving the drug and alcohol test results?** The DER is chosen within your discretion but is sometimes the person that handles the human resources aspect of your company.
11. **Why am I providing a credit card authorization to the drug and alcohol testing provider (Attachment E)?** This is required in the event that post-accident testing is required. Pre-employment and random testing are included in the flat annual membership fee.
12. **Is the price of membership \$500+ per person every year?** No, the price in the application refers to the FIRST YEAR of membership when employees are taking the OQ training and exams. Once an employee is OQ'd, the annual fee per OQ'd person is \$300 to cover the ongoing drug and alcohol testing pool and related administrative fees.
13. **What is included in the price per person for membership?** Price as listed in the application per person includes (i) coordination of training; (ii) full cost and coordination of OQ testing in Tasks 86/87; (iii) cost and coordination of pre-employment drug test; (iv) cost of random drug testing pool.
14. **What is NOT included in the price per person for membership?** There *may* be additional costs associated with the authorized instructors. For example, the Master Plumbers Council will be charging a fee for training of any non-union firm. In addition, if there is an accident on a job site and post-accident drug and alcohol testing is required, that cost will be directly charged to the plumbing firm.

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15. **What type of drug test must the participant pass?** The participant will be subject to a seven-panel drug test compliant with PHMSA requirements.
16. **When am I subject to drug and alcohol testing?** As stated, each participant must take a pre-employment drug test and pass such drug test to then be scheduled for OQ exams. Participants are then subject to random drug testing once placed in the pool, 50% of such pool is subject to random drug testing on an annual basis (per DOT regulations). The other times participants *may* be subject to drug and alcohol testing is post-accident on the job site and/or reasonable suspicion, both of which are defined in the Employer's drug plan (Attachment B).
17. **When and how do I take the pre-employment drug test?** After your application has been processed, your information will be sent to Clarity Testing, the provider that will be coordinating the test with your DER.
18. **What happens if the participant passes the pre-employment drug test?** Participants that pass their drug tests will move onto the next step.
19. **What happens if the participant fails the pre-employment drug test?** Participants that fail the pre-employment drug test will not be permitted to move on to the next step. In order to obtain operator qualified status, they must pass a second pre-employment drug test at an additional cost. If the member firm wishes to withdraw the employee from the GOQ program, they will be refunded a portion of their membership fees. *Note: The Plumbing Foundation does not enter into employment or collective bargaining agreements with any employees. If the participant fails the pre-employment drug test, any further action taken by the employer is between the employer and the employee.*
20. **Since the requirement for this OQ is not scheduled to go into effect until January 1, 2019, when am I subject to random drug testing?** Random drug testing will begin once the GOQ membership is processed by the Foundation and employees pass the pre-employment drug test. Because the training and testing availability is so limited, the sooner you apply and get the drug and alcohol component set up, the better for you and your employees as you will not be on a long waitlist for training and testing, which is already the case as of December 1, 2018.

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21. How do I obtain training? Members of Plumbers Union Local #1 and their employees shall be trained by certified instructors at the Local #1 Training Center. The Plumbing Foundation will be working with Local #1 Training Center to schedule such training. *Note: Local #1 members will only receive training after their employer has applied to the Plumbing Foundation's Gas Operator Qualification program.* For all other licensees seeking to obtain training for themselves or their employees, training will be provided by the NYC Master Plumbers Council (MPC). You can visit MPC's website below for more information, but the Plumbing Foundation will also be working with MPC to schedule training. For OQ training of your non-union firm, you can also email MPC directly at: dotoq@nycmpc.org. Website:

<http://www.nycmpc.org/DOT---Operator-Qualification.aspx>

22. Must I obtain membership in the Plumbing Foundation GOQ program prior to obtaining training? For Local #1 members and signatory employers seeking training, they must be part of the Plumbing Foundation's Gas Operator Qualification program; once the application is processed, employees are scheduled for a pre-employment drug test, and if they pass such test will be scheduled for OQ training. The Plumbing Foundation will coordinate scheduling of the training with the Local #1 Director of Training. For all other licensees who will receive training through MPC, while MPC will be offering it regardless of GOQ membership status, the Plumbing Foundation caution those who wait to apply for GOQ membership. **We highly recommend you apply for GOQ membership now.** If you decide to take the training with MPC then apply for the GOQ membership, you may run into two problems: (1) a waitlist for OQ testing and ultimately a delay in obtaining OQ; and/or (2) possibility of employee you paid to get train failing the pre-employment drug test. Note that membership in the Plumbing Foundation GOQ program is required in order for a candidate to take the required OQ exams and obtain the QR card. Part of the process when applying to the GOQ program is being added to the "Industrial Training Services" (ITS) database by the Plumbing Foundation's administrator. Having a profile in the ITS database is necessary for each participant to confirm training and to be signed up for OQ exams. The Foundation's administrator will create a unique username and password for each participant.

23. How does a candidate get an appointment to take the written and practical exams? A participant in the Plumbing Foundation GOQ program that has passed

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a pre-employment drug test and obtained the required training (i.e. a Certificate of Completion) shall be contacted by our office via email with a test date appointment.

24. **What if the test date offered does not work for the participant?** When the participant receives the exam date and they are unable to attend they must immediately notify the Plumbing Foundation via email. The email must contain the issued test date and stated reason for not being able to attend on that date. We will issue a new test date as soon as possible. Participants shall be able to have their date changed ONLY with **2 weeks** notification. The Plumbing Foundation will provide schedule changes up to three times without an additional charge. After that, an additional fee of \$100 will be charged for changing a scheduled test date to accommodate that participant.
25. **What if the candidate does not show up for the exam?** Candidates that fail to show up for an exam or cancel with less than two weeks' notice will be charged a \$300 fee to retake the exam.
26. **What is the examination process?** Each technically qualified participant (as referred by the LMP) successfully completing the 7 hour Interior Gas Piping Safety Inspection and Connections Training Program MUST complete 3 exams including:
- Task 86/87 Test A - Jurisdictional Piping General Knowledge (44 questions)
 - Task 86 Test B - Interior Jurisdictional Piping Safety Inspections (20 questions)
 - Task 87 Test B - Conducting Interior Jurisdictional Piping Construction and Maintenance Activities (44 questions)

NOTE: There is a mandatory 48 hour wait period between training and testing

In addition to the computer-based knowledge exams highlighted above, each participant must successfully complete a Practical Exam (PE) where the participant demonstrates the skill and ability to apply core fundamental knowledge. The PE is a series of simulated situations that the participant may experience while conducting interior gas piping safety inspections. Each participant must pass each written exam with a score of 80% or better to achieve Operator Qualification for conducting interior gas piping safety inspections and making jurisdictional piping connections (3 Knowledge Exams & Practical Exam). The practical exam is pass/fail.

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Failure of a Qualification Exam

If an individual does not pass a qualification exam, the individual shall be considered non-qualified and prevented for 48 hours from retaking the same exam.

If an individual does not pass a qualification exam for a third consecutive time, the individual shall be considered non-qualified and prevented from retaking that exam for a period of 6 months. The participant **MUST** repeat the 7 hour training course prior to re-testing.

For the purpose of determining exam attempts highlighted above, if an individual does not retake a failed qualification exam for a period of 6 months, the individual's next attempt to pass that exam shall be treated as a *first* attempt.

NOTE: A participant **ONLY** needs to re-test in the exam(s) they initially did not pass with a score of 80% or better.

27. **What is the "QR card"?** The QR card is a scannable, photo ID card that contains both the person's OQ status and status in the random drug and alcohol testing pool. Officials scanning the bar code on the QR card will be able to verify that the person presenting the card is the actual qualified operator.

28. **Does my OQ status ever expire?** Yes, OQ'd participants have to take an online refresher course every 3 year. The cost of this refresher course is included in your annual membership fee. As mentioned earlier, all participants will be in the ITS database which will contain the date of expiration. The Foundation will send reminders to those needing to take the refresher course.

29. **What happens if an official shows up on a job and the operator does not have their QR card with them?** If the Official asks for the QR card and it cannot be provided, the work will be stopped. For gas meter sets and swing over work, the utility crew will leave the site. The customer may be subjected to an additional fee for the utility to return. ***Make sure you have your QR card!***

30. **What happens if I lose my QR card?** You must notify the Plumbing Foundation immediately. You will be subject to a lost card fee of \$15.

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31. **What if someone else uses my card?** If an unauthorized person is found to be in possession of a QR card that is not his/her card, the card shall be confiscated and both persons shall be reported to the NYC Department of Buildings. The owner of the QR card, if not already reported that card lost or stolen, will be removed from the GOQ program.
32. **Does my OQ status automatically qualify me under Local Laws 150 and 152?** TBD, the NYC Department of Buildings is still determining what the requirements are for LLs 150 (gas qualification to do work on building gas piping) and 152 (periodic inspections of building gas piping).
33. **What are the continuing requirements of membership for the Employer/LMP?** As the LMP and employer, you must be current in the GOQ membership and up to date on all membership fees. All OQ participants must be active in the drug and alcohol testing pool. Employers are required to give **written notice within 24 hours** if an employee is no longer in their employ. Employers are responsible for that employee unless the Foundation is made aware in writing of the termination of employment. LMPs are required to give **written notice within 24 hours** if LMP's NYC DOB-issued license has been suspended or revoked. **Your license must be active and in good standing to participate in this program.** Please refer to the application materials for "portability" of employees in this program. In addition, employers are required to maintain the drug and alcohol plan (template is in Attachment B) and ensure they are in compliance with PHMSA at all times.
34. **What are the continuing requirements of membership for the Employees/Participants?** Participants must be employed by a NYC-licensed master plumber who is a member in the Plumbing Foundation's GOQ program. Participants must comply with all aspects of the drug and alcohol program and must complete the online OQ refresher course every three years to maintain the active status of their QR card.