



**TO:** T.C. Broadnax, City Manager  
**FROM:** Michael P. Slevin III, P.E., Director Environmental Services  
Hugh Messer, Interim Division Manager, Environmental Services  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Request for Ordinance - Amending Section 6B.60.060 of the Tacoma Municipal Code relating to hot water boilers located at the Central Treatment Plant – April 29, 2014  
**DATE:** April 9, 2014

**SUMMARY:**

An ordinance amending Chapter 6B.60 of the Tacoma Municipal Code, relating to boilers, to provide an exemption for the operations of the hot water boilers located at the Central Wastewater Treatment Plant.

**STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:**

- Strengthen and maintain a strong fiscal management position.

This action will help to strengthen and maintain a strong fiscal management position by not requiring unnecessary expenditures for licensing requirements for our operations personnel that receive all the required training through their certification and through City offered training programs.

**BACKGROUND:**

Substitute Ordinance No. 26951, passed by the City Council on April 30, 2002, required that all employers within the City of Tacoma who have industrial types of boilers (many types listed in the ordinance) must possess boiler operator certifications through the training program offered by Bates Technical College.

The training staff from Bates Technical College informed us that taking this training will not guarantee that the operators can pass a very difficult written and oral examination. The nature of our boiler operation does not justify that we train the operations personnel. The boilers in question are low-pressure hot water boilers used to heat primarily the secondary sludge for the dual digestion process at the Central Treatment Plant (CTP). These boilers are operated off of the digester gas produced by our own process of stabilizing the sludge. These type boilers are used industrywide in wastewater treatment industry where anaerobic digestion is utilized. Training to operate these digester gas systems are well and thoroughly covered in the standard training that an operator undergoes to achieve wastewater operator certification, including testing in the certification exam. These types of boiler systems have been utilized safely and effectively by certified wastewater operators for decades across this country. They are a mainstay of the business, and have a history of performance and safety.

Additionally, the boiler systems at the CTP are highly automated and monitored by the plant's control system. Alarms are automated as well as programmed shut-downs and isolation of boilers in the event of failures. The gas system is monitored, as is the atmosphere in the boiler rooms. The Code already provides for exemption systems smaller than these boilers that have automation and for those that are inspected by Factory Mutual Global Insurance Company. Factory Mutual is the City's insurance company and they regularly inspect the plant. They have not defined any discrepancies in our boiler operations and systems.

The language in the current Code is to provide training requirements for employees that work at facilities within the City of Tacoma limits that operate more sophisticated high pressure and steam type boilers. The boilers located at the CTP are operated by personnel with Washington State Department of Ecology



Wastewater Treatment Plant Certifications and operate on anaerobic digester gas and are considered low-pressure type units. Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators receive training on the operation of boilers and anaerobic digester gas systems to obtain their certification and also receive training from the City on the safe operations of these boilers.

**ISSUE:**

Addition of language to the Section 6B.60.060 of the Tacoma Municipal Code to provide an exemption for the operations of the hot water boilers located at the CTP. The solution is to add this language to avoid required certification to operating personnel that are already trained in the safe operation of the type of boiler existing at the CTP.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

If this exemption language is not added to the Code the City would have to train all 28 Environmental Services Operation and Maintenance personnel under this program. The training offered by Bates Technical College is an evening class and because we are a 24/7/365 operation we estimate the overtime payment for this training to be close to \$100,000 including approximately \$25,000 in course fees and class material.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends amending Chapter 6B.60 of the Tacoma Municipal Code, relating to boilers, to provide an exemption for the operations of the hot water boilers located at the Central Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The exemption language to read as follows:

6B.60.060 Exemptions from certificate requirements.

G. Any wastewater treatment plant low-pressure hot water heating boiler maintained and operated as directed by a person with a Wastewater Operator Certificate Group II or above.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Potential cost savings of approximately \$100,000 due to this Code revision.