

SWAWWA ANNUAL CONFERENCE



SHAPING WATER'S FUTURE

BOSSIER CITY, LA | OCTOBER 25-27

## 2026 Southwest Section AWWA – Top Ops Contest

### Rules and Regulations

#### Introduction:

The purpose of the Top Ops competition is to recognize and promote excellence and professionalism in all aspects of water operations by establishing a contest that gives operators the opportunity to showcase their talents. The Top Ops competition is a competitive, question and answer tournament where a moderator asks a broad range of technical questions to the participating teams, and they have limited time to answer. Strategy is involved since points are awarded for correct answers, deducted for incorrect answers, and no change occurs to the score for not answering a question.

#### Disclaimer:

1. Each competitor will be required to complete the proper waiver and registration documentation prior to competing in any event. **Verification of eligibility will be required at the time of registration.**
2. This competition is officiated by competent officials who are striving for fairness in their judgement for the events so that all competitors are judged as equally as possible. Fair and equal treatment for each competitor is the goal of this competition. There is no intention to provide anyone with an advantage. This competition is for the fun and enjoyment of the participants and spectators.
3. In order to be eligible, Sections must verify that each person is authorized to compete. Details regarding eligibility are noted in the next section.
4. Top Ops team members or team coaches who have participated as a competitor or coach are eligible to join the Top Ops Subcommittee (i.e., Local Host Committee). **If you are a member of the Subcommittee, you cannot be a current competitor or coach due to perceived conflicts of interest.**

#### Eligibility & Membership

1. A maximum of eight (8) teams will be accepted for the Top Ops contest.
2. Teams of one (1), two (2) or three (3) water operators from the Southwest AWWA Section are invited to compete.

3. Each utility may enter no more than two (2) teams.
4. Each Top Ops Competition participant must be a current AWWA member. This membership may be an individual membership, or the participant can be a regular employee of an AWWA Utility Member.
5. A team must consist of the same individuals throughout the entire SWAWWA Top Ops competition, but the team members need not be employees of the same organization or utility.
6. All team members must satisfy the following eligibility requirements:
  - a. They must work full-time as a water treatment plant employee or a water distribution employee and at least 50% of their time must be “hands on” as a water treatment plant employee or water distribution employee.
  - b. They must possess a valid water operator, laboratory, and/or distribution certificate for their jurisdiction.
  - c. Only individuals whose primary day-to-day job functions include hands-on operational tasks within the water utility or distribution system are eligible to compete. Teams may not include anyone with a more senior job function than a first line (foreperson) supervisor.

## Registration

1. To enter, follow the instructions on the SWAWWA web page. No registration is available onsite.
2. Each team captain or his/her designee must attend a pre-competition Captain’s meeting prior to the start of competition. Among other things, the timing and order of competition will be determined at this meeting. This meeting is mandatory for team captains; however, all team members may attend.
3. Each team must make its own travel and lodging arrangements. SWAWWA will not make travel or lodging arrangements for any team.

## Competition

1. Depending on the number of teams entered in the competition, Preliminary, Semi-final, and Final rounds may be conducted.
2. The number of questions for each round will be determined by the local host Top Ops coordinator based on the number of teams competing. Questions used in the competition are randomly generated through the database pool of questions that is managed by the SWAWWA Top Ops Committee.
3. Questions for the competition are categorized into the following subject areas:
  - a. Safety
  - b. Water Treatment Processes
  - c. Laboratory
  - d. Maintenance

- e. Distribution
  - f. Basic Science
4. The questions will be asked by one (1) or more moderators, who will be selected by the Local Chair of the Top Ops Competition. Each moderator must be a water professional.
  5. Each question will be displayed on a screen in front of the competitors and read aloud by the moderator. Once a question has been read, the competitors must write the answer on their whiteboards within fifteen (15) seconds for a non-math question or within twenty-five (25) seconds for a math question. Once the allotted time is up, each team will display a single whiteboard showing either the team's response or "No Response".
  6. During both the semi-final rounds and the final round, the competitors must write the answer on their whiteboards within 30 seconds.
  7. The judges will determine whether the answer displayed by each team is correct or incorrect. Correctly answered non-math questions will be worth two (2) round points. Correctly answered math questions will be worth three (3) round points. Incorrect answers (both non-math and math) will result in the deduction of one (1) round point. If a team chooses to display the "No Response" side of the whiteboard, round points will neither be earned nor deducted for that question.
  8. The number of Preliminary rounds will be based on the total number of teams competing. The team with the most points at the end of each preliminary round will be awarded three (3) qualifying points, the second-place team will receive two (2) qualifying points and the third-place team will receive one (1) qualifying point.
  9. At the end of the Preliminary rounds, the four teams with the highest qualifying points advance to the two Semi-final rounds of competition. The winning team from each of the Semi-final rounds will advance to the final Championship round to compete for the Top Ops CHAMPION title and the runner-up from each of the Sem-final rounds will compete for third place.
  10. In the case of an absolute tie at the conclusion of the preliminary rounds, five (5) tie breaker questions will be asked to determine who may advance to the semi-final round(s).

## Equipment & Materials

Each team will be supplied with the following:

- Pens/pencils
- 3 pads of paper
- 3 calculators
- 3 whiteboards
- 4 whiteboard markers
- 1-3 erasers
- 1 bell

## What Winning Team Receives

The Championship team:

1. Will be presented with a special team trophy to keep at the close of competition.

2. May be presented with an individual medal, trophy, or gift.
3. May be featured in Southwest Section AWWA publications and on the Southwest Section AWWA website.
4. May receive sponsorship from the Southwest Section AWWA for the Top Ops competition at AWWA ACE the following calendar year.

All Top Ops participants will receive a participation medal or gift.

## Judging

1. There will be a panel of no more than three (3) judges appointed by the Local Chair of the Top Ops Competition. In the event an answer needs interpretation for accuracy, one (1) of the three (3) judges will be designated as the chief judge and will have the final word in any judgements.
2. Judges cannot be associated in any way with a team they may judge and will be replaced in the event of any conflict of interest.
3. The decisions of the judges will be final.

## Safety & Conduct

1. Due to the competitive nature of the top Ops Competition, and to ensure fairness, recording or photographing Top Ops questions in any way during the competition is strictly prohibited. Persons observed recording the competition, photographing the questions, or transcribing the questions will be removed from the competition room and required to erase or destroy all captured competition material under the observance of security or a local host committee member. A team may be disqualified and/or barred from future competitions if a competitor, coach, or an audience member affiliated with the team is caught engaging in any of these activities or any other act deemed to be subversive to the integrity or fairness of the competition. **No** cell phone use will be allowed in the competition room.
2. Unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated and could result in individuals or teams being disqualified from the competition. Judges, competitors, and/or volunteers may not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal substances while performing duties related to the competition. Violators of this will be determined at the discretion of SWAWWA staff, SWAWWA Board members, or local Top Ops committee Chair.
3. Teams will not be allowed to participate if they are wearing articles of clothing or using equipment plainly displaying offensive language, slogans, or graphics.

## Penalties

The decision of the judges will be final. Arguing about an answer or any other unsportsmanlike conduct will be penalized. A warning will be given for the first offense, one (1) qualifying point will be deducted if a second offense occurs, and the team will be disqualified if a third offense occurs.