

Licensing of X-ray Operators

Section 13 of the *Radiation Safety Act 1999* requires all persons who operate radiation apparatus to perform diagnostic or therapeutic procedures on humans to hold an appropriate licence issued by the Chief Executive, Queensland Health. These use licences may only be issued to persons who have appropriate skills and knowledge of the principles and practices of radiation protection, as well as expertise in the use of the radiation apparatus.

This information sheet has been developed as a guideline to assist persons who wish to apply for an X-ray operator licence in Queensland.

Who are X-ray Operators?

X-ray operators are persons who are permitted to use plain film diagnostic X-ray equipment to perform a limited range of plain film diagnostic radiography involving the irradiation of a person, but who do not have formal qualifications in diagnostic radiography. This does not include persons performing plain film diagnostic radiography for dental or chiropractic purposes.

In general, there are three types of X-ray operator licences:

- chest and extremities
- chest and extremities (rural and remote - extended)
- chest and extremities (rural and remote - medical practitioner).

The rural and remote types of licences are restricted to the rural and remote areas specified in the licence (usually in terms of local government areas or Health Service Districts). These X-ray operator licences are necessary because, in rural and remote areas, there is often an inability for diagnostic radiographic services to be provided by diagnostic radiographers.

Applicants for rural and remote types of licences must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Chief Executive, Queensland Health that the granting of a licence in the location specified is warranted on clinical and health service provision grounds.

Note: Under the Radiation Safety Regulation 1999, 'plain film diagnostic radiography' includes a digital equivalent of plain film diagnostic radiography.

What is a Chest and Extremities Licence?

This type of licence is available to registered medical practitioners in metropolitan areas. In the rural and remote areas of the State it is also available to registered nurses, enrolled nurses and, as approved on a case by case basis by the Chief Executive, Queensland Health, other health sector employees. It permits the use of plain film diagnostic radiation apparatus for plain film diagnostic radiography of the chest and extremities. Please note that radiography of the shoulder joints and hip joints, per se, does not lie within the scope of this licence.

What is a Chest and Extremities (Rural and Remote - Extended) Licence?

This type of licence is generally only available to registered medical practitioners, registered nurses and enrolled nurses working in rural and remote areas of Queensland. It is also available to other health sector employees as approved on a case by case basis by the Chief Executive, Queensland Health. It permits the use of plain film diagnostic radiation apparatus for plain film diagnostic radiography of the chest, extremities, lateral cervical spine, shoulder, hip and abdomen.

This type of licence requires the licensee to consult with a suitably experienced licensed diagnostic radiographer, whenever radiography other than radiography of the chest and extremities is required.

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Queensland Health Radiation Health Unit Level 1 15 Butterfield Street HERSTON QLD 4006	Queensland Health Radiation Health Unit PO Box 2368 FORTITUDE VALLEY BC QLD 4006	07 3328 9987	07 3328 9622
		Website: www.health.qld.gov.au/radiationhealth	

What is a Chest and Extremities (Rural and Remote - Medical Practitioner) Licence?

This type of licence is generally only available to registered medical practitioners in rural and remote locations. It permits the use of plain film diagnostic radiation apparatus for plain film diagnostic radiography of the chest, spine, extremities, shoulder, hip, pelvis and abdomen, skull and facial bones.

This type of licence requires the licensee to consult, whenever possible, with a suitably experienced licensed diagnostic radiographer whenever radiography other than radiography of the chest or extremities is required.

Criteria to be satisfied to be granted a Licence

In general terms, if a person wishes to apply for an X-ray operator licence, the applicant must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Chief Executive, Queensland Health, that he or she meets the required competencies for the licence type sought. This may consist of an examination or other assessment deemed acceptable by, or conducted by or for, the Chief Executive, Queensland Health.

Typical scenarios for achieving these criteria are as follows:

Scenario 1

Persons who have completed all of the training and assessment mentioned in Stage 1 of the required competencies for the licence type sought, as assessed by a licensed diagnostic radiographer (refer to the relevant Required Competencies document), but who have not commenced or completed their clinical training may be issued an X-ray operator trainee licence. Only assessments made by licensed diagnostic radiographers approved by the Director, Radiation Health Unit will be accepted.

This trainee licence states that the use of the radiation apparatus is to be conducted under the guidance and mentorship of a licensed diagnostic radiographer. This trainee licence will enable persons to gain clinical competency in the range of diagnostic radiography permitted by the licence.

Trainee licence holders must submit certification from a licensed diagnostic radiographer approved to make such assessments by the Director, Radiation Health Unit, that demonstrates his or her competencies in plain film diagnostic radiography prior to the renewal of their licence. If the Chief Executive, Queensland Health is satisfied with the certification, the 'trainee' status will be removed from the licence.

Persons who have completed a course which has not yet been approved should submit details of the course for consideration by the Chief Executive, Queensland Health. The course must at least meet required competencies for that licence type. The required competencies are detailed in other information documents. If the course was conducted outside Queensland, the applicant will also need to satisfactorily complete an examination conducted by Queensland Health on Queensland's legislative requirements.

Scenario 2

An applicant who demonstrates that, at the time of application, he or she held an equivalent licence, issued under the *Radiation Safety Act 1999*, within three years prior to application, and provides evidence, to the satisfaction of the Chief Executive, Queensland Health, that his or her competencies in plain film diagnostic radiography are satisfactory, may be eligible for an X-ray operator licence.

Scenario 3

An applicant who demonstrates that, at the time of application, he or she held a corresponding licence in another Australian jurisdiction within three years prior to application, and provides evidence, to the satisfaction of the Chief Executive, Queensland Health, that his or her competencies in plain film diagnostic radiography are satisfactory, and who also satisfactorily completes an examination conducted by Queensland Health on Queensland's legislative requirements, may be eligible for an X-ray operator licence.

Procedure for application

An application for a licence to use radiation apparatus must be made to the Chief Executive, Queensland Health through the Licensing Officer, Radiation Health. An application form, Certificate of Competency and Statement of Attainment are available from Radiation Health by phoning (07) 3328 9987, or from Radiation Health's website: www.health.qld.gov.au/radiationhealth.

Licences granted remain current for the term specified on the licence and are subject to any conditions in the legislation and any additional conditions attached to the licence.

Renewal of licence

Applications for renewal must be made prior to the expiry of the current licence.

The applicant must submit, with the licence renewal application, certification from a licensed diagnostic radiographer demonstrating that the applicant is competent in the range of diagnostic radiography permitted by the licence. Only assessments made by licensed diagnostic radiographers approved by the Director, Radiation Health Unit will be accepted. This certification must be made within 12 months prior to the renewal application being submitted.

Enquiries

For further information, please contact an officer at Radiation Health on (07) 3328 9987 or, alternatively, via email at radiation_health@health.qld.gov.au.