Dairy Wastewater Treatment Operator

Site services and environment

Job title	Dairy Wastewater Treatment Operator
Department	Site services and environment
Reports to	Utilities Engineer or Engineering Manager (Environmental Manager on some sites)
Direct reports	None
Location	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*
Contract type	*[Permanent / fixed-term / other]*
Salary and benefits	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*

Job purpose

Runs the effluent treatment plant that cleans the factory wastewater before it is discharged to the sewer or a watercourse under the site consent. Keeps the plant within its limits, samples and tests the water, doses chemicals, handles sludge and keeps the records that prove compliance.

Key responsibilities

Running the treatment plant

- Start up, run and shut down the effluent plant to written procedures, and act quickly on alarms
- Use the balance tanks to even out swings in flow and strength from production and CIP
- Correct pH by dosing acid or alkali so the DAF and the biological stage work properly
- Run the dissolved air flotation (DAF) unit, adjusting coagulant and flocculant dose to remove fat and suspended solids
- Keep the biological stage healthy by controlling aeration and dissolved oxygen in an activated sludge plant, or feed rate and temperature in an anaerobic digester
- Run the final clarifier and any filters or membranes so the discharge meets the consent

Sampling, testing and compliance

- Take samples at the set points and times, from inlet to final discharge
- Test pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen and suspended solids on site, and send samples to the laboratory for COD, BOD, fats, oils and grease, ammonia and nutrients where the consent requires
- Record every result at the time and compare it with the consent limits and plant targets
- Treat any result outside a consent limit as a breach, however small, and report it or any risk of a breach at once as the consent requires
- Link with production and CIP so chemical dumps and product losses do not shock the plant
- Help with sampling visits and inspections by the water company or environmental regulator

Chemicals, sludge and maintenance

- Receive, store and handle caustic, acid, coagulants and polymers safely, following data sheets and site rules

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- Make up polymer and check dosing pumps so chemical use stays on target
- Thicken and dewater sludge and arrange collection or spreading to land as required where the job is based
- Do daily checks on pumps, blowers, mixers and dosing equipment, and report faults to maintenance
- Do simple maintenance such as cleaning probes, calibrating meters and clearing screens

Records, safety and teamwork

- Keep plant logs, consent returns and sludge records complete, accurate and ready for inspection
- Follow safe systems of work, lock-out rules and permits for confined spaces, working at height and gas risk areas
- Test the air for hydrogen sulphide, methane and oxygen before entering tanks or pits, and never enter a confined space without a permit
- Report accidents, near misses, spills and odour complaints straight away
- Give and receive a clear handover at each shift change and when on call

Qualifications and experience

Essential

- Experience running a process or treatment plant, in a dairy, food factory, water company or similar
- Able to do simple tests such as pH, dissolved oxygen and suspended solids, and record them accurately
- Ability to follow written procedures exactly
- Comfortable handling chemicals and working outdoors in all weathers
- Willingness to work a rota including weekends and on-call
- Good number skills for dosing and flow calculations

Desirable

- Water or wastewater treatment qualification or industry certificate
- Confined space, working at height and chemical handling training
- Forklift or telehandler training as required where the job is based
- Experience of DAF or biological treatment plants
- Environmental awareness training
- Basic maintenance skills on pumps and dosing equipment

Skills and attributes

- Attention to detail
- Honesty with results
- Practical problem solving
- Staying calm under pressure
- Clear communication with production and the regulator contact
- Reliability on a 24-hour plant

Measures of success

- Discharge within consent limits every day
- Samples taken and tested to schedule
- Chemical use and sludge costs within budget
- No environmental incidents or complaints
- Plant maintenance done to schedule
- Records complete and ready for inspection

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Working conditions and safety

Mostly outdoors and in plant rooms in all weathers, on a rota that includes weekends and on-call. The work involves odours, chemicals, biogas or hydrogen sulphide, confined spaces, working at height and slippery surfaces; PPE and training are provided.

- Follow health and safety rules and safe systems of work, and wear the correct PPE
- Follow food safety, hygiene, HACCP and quality procedures at all times
- Report hazards, accidents, near misses and concerns promptly

This job description outlines the main duties of the role. It is not a complete list, and the employer may update it as the business changes, in consultation with the jobholder.

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