



**LAND IMPROVEMENT
CONTRACTORS
OF ONTARIO**
www.drainage.org

If you contract drainage work, the machine must be certified and the operator and contractor must be licensed.

WHY LICENSED CONTRACTORS ARE A GOOD INVESTMENT – For Everyone!

The Agricultural Tile Drainage Installation Act applies whenever someone drains cropland other than their own. The purpose is to protect land owners who buy this service. It requires that equipment be certified and drainage contractors and their equipment operators be licensed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF). LICO contractors comply with this Act.

Many contractors grew up in the drainage business and most have spent time in the trenches where they come face-to-face with problems that must be solved quickly and effectively. This practical experience is a huge asset.

To be licensed, tile drainage machine operators must take a primary drainage course that allows them to install drains under supervision, and then having that experience, take an advanced course that allows them to work independently. The license-related courses are intensive and demand competence – in surveying, drain system design for efficiency at the least cost, the science around soil and water interactions, hydrology in the drainage system, environmental concerns as



License courses are intensive.
Photo courtesy of Andy Kester, OMAF.

associated with cropland drainage, drainage law, and equipment adaptation (weaknesses and strengths; for example, where lasers are required and where GPS can improve work productivity and quality). The objective of cropland drainage is to create the proper balance between air and water in the crop root zone and to do this while conserving as much water as possible to carry crops through summer drought.

After a candidate demonstrates a high level of classroom competence through exams he (or she) must prove ability in the field with the operation of drainage equipment. Drain installation accuracy and design competence must be proven before an operator license is issued.

The drain installation equipment that contractors use must be certified by OMAF as capable of maintaining proper grade and depth.

Licensed contractors usually provide valuable services such as assisting in obtaining necessary permits, providing a detailed map record of drains installed and providing a work guarantee. Licensed tile drainage contractors also have the experience necessary to quickly locate existing tile drainage systems.

Many contractors are also licensed to design and construct agricultural erosion control structures for surface water management. Once again, this includes intensive classroom work. They must understand the role of soil management, the design principles and place for surface water control structures, and understand

the association and integration of surface water and sub-surface drainage systems. The objective here is to reduce soil erosion and improve water quality beyond the farm.

LICO contractors engage in continued professional development activities, through summer tours and drainage days, and by attending seminars and training sessions that are associated with their winter conference. Typical topics include First Aid, Work Place Safety, Highway Regulations, Drainage Regulations, safety around utilities, drain problem solving, drain water quality and the relationship between cropland drainage, soil erosion and nutrient loss.

LICO members, through their organization, have funded considerable research in the interest of reducing negative impacts that agricultural drains may have on nutrient loss or the environment.

The goal of a LICO contractor is to improve soil productivity in a responsible and efficient way without causing downstream damage.



A certification sticker must be affixed to the drainage machine.
Photo courtesy of Sid Vander Veen, OMAF



The Land Improvement Contractors of Ontario (LICO) is an association of professional drainage contractors and suppliers of drainage pipe and equipment. The focus of their business is soil moisture management to enhance crop production in Ontario.