A Challenging and Rewarding Job

Working in the water/wastewater industry can be extremely rewarding, as you will be providing a critical community service. Everyone needs water, so supplying clean water is one of the most important jobs in the world. It takes knowledgeable, conscientious professionals to deliver clean, potable water and to ensure that wastewater is treated and returned as clean water to the environment.

This job calls for special people—people who like to work with their hands, head, and heart. Those who are interested in biology, chemistry, and mathematics are well suited to these jobs. Operators wear many hats—an operator may be repairing a water line leak and a pump one day, and the next day be monitoring processes from a computer terminal and performing laboratory testing.

A college degree is of value, but is not required. This career does require a great deal of training and experience. Most utilities provide training in-house, at local tech schools, or through association seminars and schools.

If you like a challenge and the responsibility of protecting the public health and the environment, this could be the job for you!

For more information:

South Carolina Environmental Training Center
Central Carolina Technical College
Sumter, SC
(803) 778-6656
www.cctech.edu

South Carolina Water Environment Association
(803) 939-9574
www.weasc.org

South Carolina Section of the American Water Works Association
(803) 939-9574
www.scawwa.org

S.C. Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation Board of Environmental Certification
(803) 896-4430
www.llr.state.sc.us/POL/Environmental/

Greenville Technical College
(864) 250-8111
www.gvltec.edu

Trident Technical College
Charleston, SC
(843) 574-6152
www.tridenttech.edu

South Carolina Rural Water Association (SCRWA)
P.O. Box 479, Clinton, SC 29325
(864) 833-5566
www.scrwa.org

York Technical College
York, SC
(803) 981-7020
www.yorktech.com
Requirements

Water and wastewater operators are certified by the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation Board of Environmental Certification. Requirements are as follows:

Trainee
1. Complete high school or the equivalent
2. Submit application

Class “D”
1. Hold valid Trainee operator certification
2. Pass an examination approved by the Board
3. Submit an Experience Verification Form documenting one year of actual operating experience.

Class “C”
1. Hold a valid Class “D” operator certification
2. Pass an examination approved by the Board
3. Submit an Experience Verification Form documenting two years of actual operating experience.

Class “B”
1. Hold a valid Class “C” operator certification
2. Pass an examination approved by the Board
3. Submit an Experience Verification Form documenting three years of actual operating experience.

Class “A”
1. Hold a valid Class “B” operator certification
2. Pass an examination approved by the Board
3. Submit an Experience Verification Form documenting four years of actual operating experience.

Preparation

For water and wastewater operators it is especially helpful to have science, math, and computer knowledge, with some mechanical ability. It is recommended that students take preparation courses in biology, chemistry, and mathematics.

The Rewards

Depending on the size of the utility, salaries can begin in the upper-$20,000s and reach over $50,000 at the upper level. Almost all municipal systems offer health care and retirement plans.

One of the greatest rewards for water and wastewater operators is knowing that they are protecting public health and the environment and providing a much-needed and valuable service to their community.

Operator Certification

There are a number of colleges and training providers that offer courses for operator certification. Central Carolina Technical College and other local technical schools have approved lists of online courses available for operator certification. Contact Central Carolina directly at (803) 778-6656 for more information.

A list of upcoming water and wastewater certification courses can be found on the Central Carolina website at www.cctech.edu.

Experience

Try visiting your local water or wastewater utility. You might be able to gain some experience through a summer job or internship. It would give you the chance to see if this is the career for you.

Opportunity

“Within the next decade, the job market for water supply operators holds the promise of becoming a buyers’ market. Because qualified operators are expected to be in short supply, those with ambition may see more opportunities for advancement, a choice of locations and utility size, work schedule flexibility, employer-supported training, and negotiable wages and benefits.”

The American Water Works Association

It’s been estimated that almost 50% of today’s water and wastewater operators will retire within the next five to seven years. The American Water Works Association