



# Environmental Careers

## A Challenging and Rewarding Job

Working in the water/wastewater industry can be extremely rewarding since you are providing an important service to your community. It just might be one of the most important positions in the world since no one can live without water. It takes knowledgeable, conscientious people to deliver clean, potable water and to ensure that wastewater is discharged in an environmentally safe manner.

It takes special people to do this job. People who like to work with their hands and have an interest in biology, chemistry, and mathematics are well-suited for the job. One thing is for sure – no two days are the same for water or wastewater operators. They may be repairing a leak in a water line, running a backhoe, welding pipe and fixing a pump one day and the next day working in the laboratory testing samples for pathogens and microorganisms or presenting information to the town board or the public. Operators wear many hats.

A college degree is of value but is not required. This career does require a great deal of training and experience. *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:

Association of State Drinking Water Administrators  
(202) 293-7655  
[www.asdwa.org](http://www.asdwa.org)

Environmental Finance Center at the Maxwell School  
of Syracuse University  
(315) 443-9994  
[www.epa.gov/efinpage/efcn/efcfactsu.htm](http://www.epa.gov/efinpage/efcn/efcfactsu.htm)

NYS Conference of Mayors and Municipal Officials  
(518) 463-1185  
[www.nycom.org](http://www.nycom.org)

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
(518) 402-8177  
[www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dow/bwcp/opcert.html](http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dow/bwcp/opcert.html)

NYS Department of Health  
(518) 402-7712  
[www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/water/operate/operate.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/water/operate/operate.htm)

NY Rural Water Association  
(518) 828-3155  
[www.nyruralwater.org](http://www.nyruralwater.org)

NY Section American Water Works Association  
(315) 455-2614  
[www.nysawwa.org](http://www.nysawwa.org)

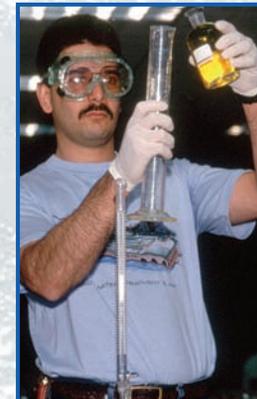
NY Water Environment Association  
(315) 422-7811  
[www.nywea.org](http://www.nywea.org)

RCAP Solutions  
(315) 482-2756  
[www.rcapsolutions.org](http://www.rcapsolutions.org)

United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)  
Water Operator Certification Website  
(800-426-4791)–Safe Drinking Water Hotline  
[www.epa.gov/safewater/opcert.htm](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/opcert.htm)

## Water & Wastewater Operators

### Work with your hands, your head and your heart.





## ✔ Requirements

Water and wastewater operators serve their neighbors by protecting public health. It is extremely important that people receive clean, potable water and that wastewater be discharged in an environmentally safe manner.

Water operators are certified by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). Wastewater operators are certified by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC).

There are minimum educational and experience requirements depending on the various certification grade levels. All levels now require a high school or GED diploma, training courses and on-the-job experience.

### For Water Operator Certification:

- High school or GED diploma,
- Training—from a 15-hour course to 120 hours for the highest level,
- Experience begins with six months on-the-job and can extend to ten years at the upper level,
- Pass NYSDOH exam.

### For Wastewater Operator Certification:

- High school or GED diploma,
- Training—from 60 hours to 170 hours for the highest level,
- Experience begins with six months on-the-job and can extend to eight years at the upper level,
- Pass NYSDEC exam.

## ✔ Preparation

For water and wastewater operators it is especially helpful to have some science and math knowledge with some mechanical ability. It is recommended that students take preparation courses in biology, chemistry and mathematics, as well as some shop courses like carpentry, metal working, plumbing, heavy equipment or automotive studies.

## ✔ The Rewards

Depending on the size of the utility, salaries can begin in the mid-\$20,000s and reach over \$100,000 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. The NYSDOH and NYSDEC also have approved lists of home study and online courses available for operator certification. Contact the agencies directly for more information. A list of upcoming water and wastewater certification courses can be found on the following water and wastewater websites. Please visit the NYSDEC website at [www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dow/bwcp/opcert.html](http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dow/bwcp/opcert.html). The NYSDOH website is at [www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/water/operate/operate.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/water/operate/operate.htm).

## ✔ Experience

Try visiting your local water or wastewater department. 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*

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**It's been estimated that almost 50% of today's water and wastewater operators will retire within the next five to seven years. They'll need to be replaced.**

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*The American Water Works Association*

It takes 2 gallons to brush your teeth, 2 to 7 gallons to flush a toilet, and 25 to 50 gallons to take a shower.

