



# CAREERS IN WATER: PATHWAYS WITHOUT LIMITS

By DFT Solutions Group



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Water is essential to every community. Behind clean, safe water are professionals working every day to protect public health and the environment.

The opportunity? Many water careers can be started with training and certifications—without a 4-year degree.



**STRONG  
JOB STABILITY**



**CAREER  
GROWTH**



**COMPETITIVE PAY  
(MANY REACHING  
SIX FIGURES)**

## 2. CAREER CATEGORIES

### OPERATIONS (HIGH DEMAND)



#### ROLES:

- ✓ Water Operator
- ✓ Wastewater Operator
- ✓ Distribution System Operator

#### SALARY RANGE:

**\$60,000 – \$120,000+**

Senior operators, leads, and overtime roles can exceed \$130K+

#### ENTRY PATH:

- Certifications (Grade I–V)
- On-the-job training
- Community college programs

### ENVIRONMENTAL / COMPLIANCE



#### ROLES:

- ✓ Environmental Inspector
- ✓ Stormwater Inspector
- ✓ Environmental Compliance Specialist

#### SALARY RANGE:

**\$70,000 – \$120,000+**

Senior / specialized roles can exceed \$130K+

#### ENTRY PATH:

- Certifications + field experience
- High school diploma (in some roles)
- Associate's or Bachelor's (optional for advancement)

### SCIENCE / ENGINEERING



#### ROLES:

- ✓ Environmental Engineer
- ✓ Hydrologist
- ✓ Water Quality Scientist

#### SALARY RANGE:

**\$75,000 – \$140,000+**

Senior engineers and project managers can exceed \$150K+

#### EDUCATION PATH:

- Bachelor's degree (typical)
- Advanced degrees for higher-level roles

### TRADES / FIELD WORK



#### ROLES:

- ✓ Utility Worker
- ✓ Pipefitter
- ✓ Maintenance Technician

#### SALARY RANGE:

**\$50,000 – \$100,000+**

Experienced, union, or specialized roles can exceed \$110K–\$120K+

#### ENTRY PATH:

- Apprenticeships
- Union programs
- On-the-job training



### 3. SALARY OVERVIEW

Many careers in the water industry can reach:

**\$100,000+**  
with experience

**\$120K–\$150K+**

in advanced or leadership roles

#### FACTORS THAT INCREASE PAY:

- ✓ Certifications
- ✓ Experience
- ✓ Overtime
- ✓ Location (urban areas often pay more)



### 4. HOW TO GET STARTED



#### LOCAL RESOURCES:

Water districts, city and county utilities, public works departments



#### EDUCATION & TRAINING:

Community colleges, workforce development programs, trade and apprenticeship programs



#### CERTIFICATIONS:

- Water Treatment (Grade I–V)
- Wastewater (Grade I–V)
- Distribution Operator



### 5. CERTIFICATIONS

(NATIONWIDE + CA EXAMPLE)

#### NATIONWIDE:

Each state has its own certification system.

Check with your State Water Board / Environmental Agency or local utility or municipality.



#### CALIFORNIA EXAMPLE:

State Water Resources Control Board  
Office of Operator Certification

#### IMPORTANT NOTE:

If you are outside of California, always check your local or state water authority for requirements.



### 6. WHERE TO APPLY

#### JOB PLATFORMS:

[GovernmentJobs.com](https://www.governmentjobs.com)

[indeed](https://www.indeed.com) [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com)

#### PUBLIC SECTOR:

- City websites (Stockton, Sacramento, Oakland, etc.)
- County job boards
- Water districts

#### PRO TIP:

Search: "Water Operator Trainee"  
"Environmental Inspector"  
"Utility Worker"



### 7. YOUR NEXT STEP

Water needs people like you.

- ✓ Learn
- ✓ Ask questions
- ✓ Explore local opportunities



### START HERE:

[dft-solutions-group.com/  
careers-training/](https://dft-solutions-group.com/careers-training/)



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### 8. DFT CALL TO ACTION

is committed to:

- Environmental education
- Workforce development
- Creating real career pathways

#### WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Scan the QR code in the book or visit:  
[dft-solutions-group.com](https://dft-solutions-group.com)

