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

Illinois EPA
(217) 782-3397
www.epa.state.il.us

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
(217) 782-6302
www.dnr.state.il.us

Illinois Section American Water Works Association
(866) 521-3595
www.isawwa.org

Illinois Rural Water Association
(217) 287-2115
www.irrwa.org

Illinois Association of Water Pollution Control Operators
(217) 530-2634
www.iawpco.org

Illinois Water Environment Association
(312) 751-5190
www.iwesite.org

Central States Water Environment Association
(414) 365-2231
www.cswea.org

This brochure was developed by the New York Water and Wastewater Education and Outreach Committee.
**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 Illinois EPA. Wastewater operators are also certified by the Illinois EPA.

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 diploma or GED
- Experience: between six months and three years on-the-job depending on the operator certification level
- Examination: pass Illinois EPA exam
- Continuing Education: between 15 and 30 hours every three years depending on the operator certification level

**For Wastewater Operator Certification:**
- High school diploma or GED
- Experience: between one year and eight years on-the-job depending on the operator certification level
- Examination: pass Illinois EPA exam
- Continuing Education: currently none, but requirements are currently being developed, and will likely be the same as for water operators

**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.

**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

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.

The American Water Works Association