

## **Careers in the Water Industry**

Written by: Robert McDonald, General Manager

In southern California, water agencies face incredible pressures such as water shortages and water supply management; however, nationally there are several pressures facing the industry as a whole. One of these challenges is finding technically qualified individuals to maintain water distribution systems and water treatment facilities to comply with strict water quality regulations set by the Environmental Protection Agency and the State Department of Drinking Water. During the first week of October, *Water Professionals Appreciation Week* showcased the important role that water professionals play in providing water, wastewater, and recycled water throughout the state. A quick scroll through #CAWaterWeek posts on social media will show you just a few of the dedicated men and women that work behind the scenes to provide these services. I want to acknowledge how critical these men and women are to making our water systems safe and reliable. I also want to thank them for their dedication and professionalism.

California's water industry provides a variety of job opportunities. Engineers, Accountants, Water Resource Managers, GIS Technicians, Clerks, Customer Service Technicians, Water Conservation Specialists, Backflow Specialists, and Water Treatment and Distribution Operators are just a few of the job titles that this sector employs to provide you with safe and reliable water each day. According to CA Water Jobs, California employs 6,000 new water professionals each year. Although some of these jobs do require college degrees or professional certificates, many positions only require a high school diploma or GED, good mechanical abilities, basic math skills, and the ability to understand new drinking water standards and technologies. Water Treatment and Distribution Operators are two examples of water careers that do not require a 4 year college degree and provide the opportunity to earn a good living while serving your community. These positions provide room for advancement as you gain work experience and obtain certifications that are recognized throughout the state and reciprocated throughout the country.

Treatment and Distribution departments work collectively to ensure safe and reliable drinking water. Water Treatment Operators are tasked with treating and testing water from rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and underground aquifers to ensure it is safe to drink. In the Carpinteria Valley, the water that is treated and delivered comes from Lake Cachuma, the District's wells, and the State Water Project. Treatment Operators are responsible for monitoring and repairing treatment and production equipment, adding chemicals to disinfect water, analyzing treatment performance, managing system pressure, and monitoring and analyzing water quality throughout the service area. Distribution Operators, on the other hand, focus on water reliability. They maintain distribution equipment such as pipes, valves, services and hydrants. They are responsible for laying pipelines, making water-line taps, and installing water services, hydrants, and valves. With 75 miles of pipeline in the Carpinteria Valley installed over the last 77 years, our Distribution Operators stay very busy. Entry-level jobs in these departments do not require certification, but to advance, State certifications would be required.

Obtaining your Water Treatment Operator 1 (T1) or Distribution Operator 1 (D1) certifications through the California Water Resources Control Board can make you a more qualified candidate for a job in the water industry or help you move up to a more advanced position. To obtain a T1 or D1 certificate, the only requirements are proof of your high-school diploma or GED and an understanding of the duties, processes, and standards that apply to California water purveyors. Passing these tests demonstrates to the agency that you have basic understanding of the responsibilities associated with the job. Once you take a specialized training course, you are eligible to take the level 2 certification exams and after you work in one of these departments for a year, you are able to take the level 3 certification exams. In California, with more on-the-job experience you can test up to a Treatment Operator 5 (T5) and Distribution Operator 5 (D5) certification. Many employees with high certifications are qualified to fulfil management positions later in their career.

The water industry offers stable jobs that cover many disciplines. Are you looking to become a part of the industry? Carpinteria Valley Water District has an opening for a Water Treatment Operator with a Treatment 2 (T2) certification and a preferred Distribution 3 (D3) certification. Applications can be found online or at the District during business hours. If you are interested in learning more about the District's ongoing projects, please visit our website [www.cvwd.net](http://www.cvwd.net), follow us on Twitter @CarpWater, and like Carpinteria Valley Water District on Facebook.