

Understanding the Local Labor Market

Promising Career Pathways in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County

Focus: Utility Workers

Understanding the Local Labor Market: Promising Career Pathways in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County is a useful resource for career counselors and other professionals responsible for helping jobseekers make informed decisions about employment and training. Featured occupations are selected on the basis of vacancies, wages and benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

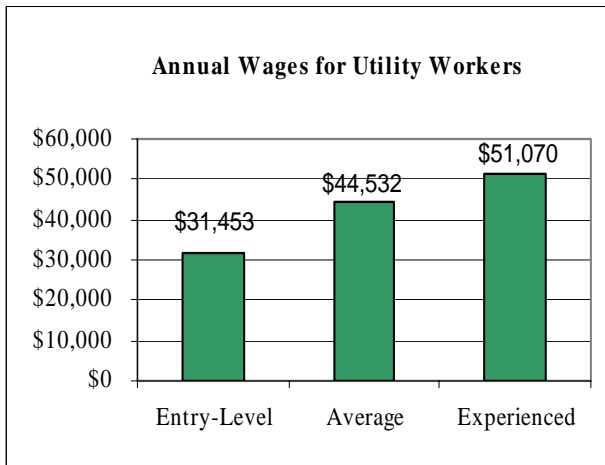
What do utility workers do?

Utility workers is a broad category that encompasses occupations that work with electric power, natural gas, steam supply, water supply and sewage removal. Utility worker occupations include:

- *Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers* who install or repair cables or wires used in electrical power or distribution systems;
- *Power Generating Plant Operators* who control, operate, or maintain machinery to generate electric power;
- *Water and Liquid Waste Treatment Plant and System Operators* who operate and control an entire process or system of machines;
- *Meter Readers* who record consumption of electricity, water, gas, or steam; and
- *Electrical and Electronics Repairers* who inspect, test, repair or maintain electrical equipment.

What are wages, benefits, and work conditions for utility workers?

- Wages, benefits and work conditions vary by occupation and employer. As is shown in the table, the average annual wage for utility occupations in our region is \$44,532.
- Utility workers must follow strict safety procedures to avoid injuries such as electrical shock, falls, and cuts. Some occupations require driving a utility vehicle, climbing poles and ladders, working in holes or ditches underground, and/or working outdoors.
- Most utility workers work 40 hours per week, although overtime may be required during emergencies.



Source: PA Dept. of Labor & Industry, Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (www.dli.state.pa.us/workforceinfo)
The data above is for the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)

What do utility workers like about their jobs?

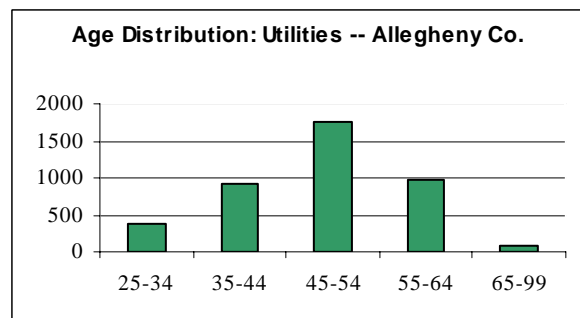
- Utility workers enjoy performing physical activities such as climbing, balancing, stooping, or kneeling.
- When dealing with customers, they like to give full attention to what other people are saying, take time to understand the points being made, and ask questions as appropriate.
- Utility workers enjoy finding the causes of operating problems and solving them.

What are advancement opportunities and related occupations?

- Utility workers have the opportunity to learn on the job and advance their skills. For example, entry-level installers may be hired as ground workers, helpers, or tree trimmers, who clear branches from lines. After on-the-job training these workers may advance to positions stringing cable and performing service installations.
- With experience, utility workers may advance to more sophisticated maintenance and repair positions responsible for increasingly larger portions of the network.
- Promotion to supervisory or training positions also is possible, but more advanced supervisory positions often require a college degree.
- Related occupations include: electric meter installers and repairers, valve and regulator repairers, power distributors and dispatchers, and gas processing plant operations.

How many openings are there for utility workers?

- The PA Department of Labor and Industry estimates that there are approximately 3,030 utility workers employed in Allegheny County.
- The chart below suggests that more job opportunities will open up as a significant number of workers retire.



FOCUS: Utility Workers

How can I become a utility worker?

- Utility workers are usually required to have at least a high school diploma or GED.
- Prospective employees also should possess a basic knowledge of algebra and trigonometry, and have mechanical ability. Basic computer skills are essential to work in the utility industry.
- Employers prefer applicants with a technical knowledge of the system they are interested in working (gas, electric, water, etc.), and/or experience obtained through vocational/technical programs, community colleges, or the Armed Forces.
- The following are common work activities that over 50% of those employed in the industry use on a daily basis: using hand or power tools, reading technical drawings, installing/connecting electrical equipment to power circuit, using electrical or electronic test devices or equipment, and using high voltage apparatus.
- Programs in the utility industry are offered by many community or technical colleges. These programs often are operated with assistance from local employers and unions.
- Because the work can entail lifting heavy objects, climbing, and other physical activity, applicants should have stamina, strength, and coordination, and must not be afraid of heights. The ability to distinguish colors is necessary because wires and cables may be color-coded.
- A good driving record is important because some utility workers will be required to hold a commercial driver's license and operate company-owned vehicles.
- Customer service, problem-solving, attention to detail, and the ability to follow directions are essential skills for those looking for employment in the utility industry.

How do I find out about utility worker jobs?

- **Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink** has job postings for these positions (call 1-866-317-JOBS or visit www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com to learn more).
- **Utility-Worker.com**, www.utility-worker.com, provides a job search for a variety of utility jobs.
- **Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO**, <http://uwua.net/>, provides information and educational resources for utility workers.
- **International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers**, www.ibew.org, provides resources for utility workers.

Where can I get trained locally?

- **Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) and Duquesne Light**, <http://www.ccac.edu>, 412-393-7890. Provides an Electrical Utility Worker Certificate preparing students for entry-level positions.
- **Dean Institute of Technology**, <http://deantech.edu>, 412-531-4433. Provides training for building maintenance technician.
- **Forbes Road Career and Technology Center** — www.forbesroad.org, 412-373-8100. Offers training for telecommunications line installers and repairers.
- **Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics (PIA)** — www.pia.edu, 412-346-2100. Offers an associates degree in Electronic Systems Technology.
- **Triangle Tech**, <http://www.triangle-tech.com>, 412-359-1000. Provides a variety of training for utility workers.

Can I get help to pay for training?

- Financial aid may be available for training associated with degree programs.
- Limited funds may be available through Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink.

Remember...

Labor markets are affected by economic, social, and institutional factors that are difficult to predict. No one can forecast perfectly how many jobs will be available, or whether there will be too many or too few workers to fill those jobs. The reality is that employment is never a guarantee, even for individuals who pursue training in demand occupations.

The Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board (TRWIB) is charged with promoting a coordinated and accountable employment and training system for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Responsibilities include setting and monitoring local performance standards, chartering PA CareerLink centers that provide a range of services to jobseekers and employers, and certifying qualified training providers. Board members are appointed by Mayor Luke Ravenstahl (City of Pittsburgh) and Chief Executive Dan Onorato (Allegheny County).

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Phone: 412-552-7090 | Fax: 412-552-7091 | Internet: www.trwib.org

President: Tommy Johnson | Chief Executive Officer: Ronald D. Painter | Editor: Kelleigh J. Butler
The TRWIB does not warrant that the information in this publication is accurate or complete.



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