



RECRUITING & TRAINING VETERANS

FOR CAREERS IN THE WATER SECTOR

Veterans, especially those recently discharged; represent a major recruiting opportunity for water and wastewater utilities. Prior military experience gives Veterans an understanding of teamwork, discipline, and personal accountability that can make them excellent employees for these fields. In addition, many Veterans already possess technical skills and training that are directly transferable to careers in the water sector.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Labor (DOL) administer programs to assist Veterans in their transition to civilian careers and oversee funding to pay for education and job training. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), American Water Works Association (AWWA) and Water Environment Federation (WEF) are working with these agencies to promote water sector careers nationally. The most effective promotion takes place at the local level in the interaction between the utilities and local government program staff. With this in mind, EPA, AWWA, and WEF developed this summary to help utilities understand the benefits of these programs and how to work with them to recruit and train Veterans for water sector careers.

Resources for Recruiting Veterans

How does the Department of Veterans Affairs help Veterans find jobs?

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employs Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) and Employment Coordinators (ECs) located in Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) offices across the country. VRCs assist Veterans with disabilities by developing individualized rehabilitation plans that may include re-training, education, and employment goals. VRCs authorize the benefits and provide the support needed to complete the rehabilitation plan. ECs help with the job search and placement of Veterans in suitable employment. Contact information for VR&E is provided at the end of this document.

How do I work with the Department of Veterans Affairs?

Utilities interested in recruiting Veterans should reach out to the VR&E staff located in their state. Educating these key counselors about the water sector and promoting water sector career opportunities will help utilities to find and recruit technically skilled and interested Veterans for open positions. Contact information for VR&E is provided at the end of this document.

How does the Department of Labor help Veterans find jobs?

The Department of Labor (DOL) Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) maintains federal offices and staff in every state to assist Veterans in finding jobs and receiving education and training benefits. The federal VETS staff includes the state Director for Veterans' Employment and Training (DVET). In addition, DOL-funded staff specializing in assistance to Veterans can be found in state workforce agencies across the country. Note that the names of these state workforce agencies vary from state to state (e.g., Career One-Stop center). The staff assigned to Veterans' issues are called Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialists (DVOPs).

How do I work with the Department of Labor?

Utilities interested in recruiting Veterans should reach out to their state's Director for Veterans' Employment (DVET), as well as to the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialists (DVOPs) in their state. Educating these key counselors about the water sector and promoting water sector career opportunities will help utilities to find and recruit technically skilled and interested Veterans for open positions. DVETs can facilitate connection with the state workforce agency as well as the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) managers on any military installations in the state.

Work with the Department of Labor & the Department of Veterans Affairs to Recruit Veterans

- Provide information on specific job openings and/or openings that are likely to be available within the next two years;
- Offer to make a presentation highlighting career opportunities in the water sector (Give this type of presentation once a year);
- Ask about the possibility of developing an on-the-job training or work experience opportunity for Veterans with disabilities;
- Provide resources for further information, for example:
 - Work for Water web site: www.workforwater.org/
 - Work for Water brochure: www.workforwater.org/resourceforwaterprofessionals/page.aspx?id=51
 - Water you Waiting For? Video: www.epa.gov/safewater/operatorcertification/wateryouwaitingfor/index.html
(Copies can be downloaded to a DVD from the website)

Contact Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E):

Angela Wilcher: 202-461-9883 or Angela.Wilcher@va.gov

National and Regional Employment Coordinators List:

www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp

Find Department of Labor staff in your area at:

www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm#RegionalStateDirectory

www.servicelocator.org/

Free Job Posting on the Veteran Employment Center, eBenefits.va.gov

Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) website:
www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/jobs

This website is geared towards Veterans and allows employers to post job opportunities for free.

For more information, contact VR&E by phone at 202-461-9600 or by email at:
VRE.VBACO@va.gov. Explain that you are an employer interested in posting job openings on the Veteran Employment Center website.

What does the Transition Assistance Program do?

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) helps service members and their spouses make the initial transition from military service to the civilian workplace. TAP consists of comprehensive three-day workshops at selected military installations worldwide. Workshop attendees learn about job searches, career decision-making, current occupational and labor market conditions, and resume and cover letter preparation and interviewing techniques. Participants also are provided with an evaluation of their employability relative to the job market and receive information on the most current Veterans' benefits.

Resources for Training and Educating Veterans

GI Bill Education and Training Benefits

The GI Bill provides a variety of financial education and training benefits that can be advantageous to both the Veteran and the hiring utility. The amount of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits payable to a Veteran is determined by eligibility under VA laws and the type of program that the Veteran enrolls in to pursue his/her objective. The wide applicability of the GI Bill makes it easy for Veterans to re-train for positions in utilities.



How can my utility help Veterans receive on-the-job training benefits?

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) may pay monthly financial education benefits to a Veteran while he/she is taking part in an approved entry-level on-the-job training (on-the-job training lasting up to 24 months) or taking part in an apprenticeship (may be longer than 24 months).

During the training period, the utility pays an apprenticeship or internship wage while the Veteran receives an additional financial stipend through the VA. Helping Veterans to receive this benefit can help utilities recruit and retain Veteran employees. Please note that apprenticeship or internship wages must be applied consistently. A utility may not pay lower apprenticeship or internship wages for Veteran trainees that are doing the same type of work as non-Veteran trainees.

A utility must provide training that is supervised and organized in order to qualify for approval for Veterans training benefits. The training may include a Veteran trainee acquiring necessary job skills by shadowing a senior utility employee through daily routines.

Financial Education Benefits for Veterans

Education benefits can be applied to degree programs (e.g., bachelors in engineering), licensing and certification training (e.g., operator certification training) and on-the-job training (e.g., on-the-job training at a utility). On-line and correspondence courses are also covered.

Financial Benefits for On-the-Job Training

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) may pay monthly financial education benefits to a Veteran while he/she is taking part in an approved entry-level on-the-job training (on-the-job training lasting up to 24 months) or taking part in an apprenticeship (may be longer than 24 months).

On-the-Job Training Approval

In order for Veterans and utilities to take advantage of these training benefits, on-the-job training programs must be approved by the State Approving Agency (SAA) prior to receiving any training or education benefits. See "About State Approving Agencies" for more information.

Find your State Approving Agency at: <http://nasaa-vetseducation.com/contacts/default.aspx>



Help your utility by helping veterans receive on-the-job training benefits

(See "How can my utility help veterans receive on-the-job training benefits?")



About State Approving Agencies – How can I get my training program approved?

Prior to Veterans receiving any of the training and education benefits mentioned previously, the training program must be approved by the State Approving Agency (SAA). Approval applies to formalized education, such as university engineering programs, as well as to utility-based on-the-job training. Each state has a SAA that is responsible for approving and verifying training administered in that state. All approvals are conducted on a training by training basis. Utilities may have more than one qualifying training program (e.g., on-the-job training for entry-level operators and on-the-job training for entry level engineers). The approval process is not difficult and most SAA staff can walk a utility through the process. If your utility would like participate in the benefits programs mentioned previously, your utility must apply to your specific SAA. Contact your state SAA for more details.

National Association of State Approving Agencies Contacts

<http://nasaa-vetseducation.com/contacts/default.aspx>

Resources for Training Veterans with Disabilities

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program also authorizes on-the-job training and apprenticeship training described previously. In addition, the following benefits are administered by VR&E. These programs benefit both Veterans and the utilities that hire them. Participating Veterans may have disabilities ranging from minor (e.g., loss of a toe) to major head trauma. Prior to referring Veterans to a specific career path, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) conduct a full assessment of the Veteran to determine if he/she is physically and mentally capable of performing the duties of the job. Due to the varying demands of possible utility positions and the wide range of disabilities experienced by participating Veterans, utilities should work closely with local VRCs to determine the feasibility of participating in the following programs.

How can my municipal utility use Non-paid Work Experience training benefits?

The Non-paid Work Experience Program is similar to an unpaid internship. It provides Veterans with disabilities a chance to gain experience learning a particular job while allowing the employer to determine if the Veteran is a good fit for the position. The participating utility does not pay the Veteran any wages while he/she is in the program and is under no obligation to hire the Veteran at the end of the non-paid work experience. A Veteran participating in this program receives a small stipend from Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) while he/she is participating in the program. This program is only available to federal, state and local government. Contact information for VR&E is provided at the end of this document.

How can privately-owned and nonprofit utilities use Special Employer Incentive Programs for employers of disabled Veterans?

This benefit is only available to private and nonprofit entities (i.e., municipally-owned utilities are not eligible to participate). Under this program, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) may pay up to half of a Veteran's salary for up to 6 months while the Veteran is in an on-the-job training status. Only certain disabled Veterans may participate in this type of program. Contact information for VR&E is provided at the end of this document.

Program Contacts

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Central Office:

Angela Wilcher: 202-461-9883 or Angela.Wilcher@va.gov

National and Regional Employment Coordinators List:

<http://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp>

Department of Labor (DOL) VETS Regional Directory:

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm#RegionalStateDirectory>

LVERs and DVOPs located in state workforce agencies: <http://www.servicelocator.org/>

National Association of State Approving Agencies Contacts:

<http://na-saa-vetseducation.com/contacts/default.aspx>

Glossary

- DOL** Department of Labor
- DVET** Director for Veterans' Employment and Training
- DVOP** Disabled Veterans Outreach Program
- EC** Employment Coordinator
- LVER** Local Veterans Employment Representative
- SAA** State Approving Agency
- TAP** Transition Assistance Program
- VA** Department of Veterans Affairs
- VETS** Veterans Employment and Training Service (a division of DOL)
- VR&E** Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (a division of VA)
- VRC** Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

