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# THE **JOB** CENTER

## PLUMBER



Plumbers often go between the walls of homes or commercial buildings to install or repair plumbing systems, fixtures, and appliances.

When hope springs eternal, we celebrate. When a faucet springs eternal, we call a plumber. People often forget the importance of plumbers — until a faucet springs a leak. Plumbers are skilled workers who install and repair water, waste disposal, drainage, and natural gas systems in homes and commercial buildings. They also install and repair plumbing fixtures such as bathtubs, sinks, toilets, and appliances such as water heaters and dishwashers.

In the plumbing trade, there are four different areas that plumbers may specialize. Pipelayers lay sewers, water mains, oil or gas lines, concrete and clay. Pipefitters install and repair pipe systems used in manufacturing and they also install controls that are being used to regulate these systems. Steamfitters install pipes that transport liquid or gas, and plumbers work in homes and commercial buildings repairing water, waste disposal, gas, and drainage systems.

Plumbers work with a variety of materials when assembling a system. They cut, bend, and connect lengths of copper, steel, brass, lead, or plastic pipes for residential work. Plumbers might work with large, cast-iron pipes for municipal sewer systems.

Construction plumbers follow blueprints or building plans when installing piping. They measure and mark areas for pipes soon after the structure is framed. Further in the construction process, plumbers connect the fixtures to the pipes.

### John Kenney Plumbing Instructor

**Q:** How is being a plumber different today than ten years ago?

**A:** New technologies are being used today. There are also new options for the materials we use. Many companies are now converting from copper to CPVC, a form of plastic pipe. This means a more efficient installation at a better price. There is also corrosion on the pipe itself.

**Q:** What is the future of plumbing, given these advances in technology?

**A:** The future is promising because there will always be a need for skilled plumbers. There will always be new construction, as well as the need for repairs. As the country grows continues to grow, so will the demand for plumbers.

When plumbing problems arise in homes or commercial buildings, plumbers are called in to diagnose and repair the problem, often a broken or blocked pipe. They might have to cut holes in walls, floors, or ceilings to gain access to the pipes. Plumbers often stand for long periods, lift heavy pipes, and work in cramped positions. Construction plumbers are often exposed to extreme weather conditions.

Almost all pipelayers, plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters are trained through a four to five year apprenticeship. These apprenticeships are often provided by the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of the United States and Canada. Local chapters of the Associated Builders and Contractors, the National Association of Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors, the Home Builders Institute of the National Association of Home Builders, and the American Fire Sprinkler Association may offer apprenticeships or nonunion training.

Although there are no uniform national licensing requirements, most communities require plumbers to be licensed.

Licensing requirements vary from area to area, but most localities require workers to pass an examination that tests their knowledge of the trade and of local plumbing codes.

**Q:** Looking at work available in Florida, what kind of role does plumbing play?

**A:** Since house construction is down, service work is on the rise. Many people are choosing to remodel and repair rather than buying new.

**Q:** What advice would you give someone looking to get into the trade?

**A:** Overall, employers are looking for reliable workers. They want dependability and a willingness to learn. Employers want plumbers who are also willing to become managers and advance in the field.

### SKILLS REQUIRED

Plumbers should have manual dexterity, excellent eye-hand coordination, and good math skills, and physical strength.

### WHERE/HOW TO GET TRAINING

#### Schooling

Plumbers enter into the profession in a variety of ways. Most residential and industrial plumbers get their training from technical schools, community colleges, and from on-the-job training. Plumbers who work mainly for commercial enterprises are usually trained through formal apprenticeship programs.

Apprentice plumbers are at least 18 years old and usually have a high school diploma or the equivalent. Apprenticeships typically last four to five years. Classroom study is also an important part of an apprenticeship. Apprentice plumbers take classes in mathematics, blueprint reading, and applied physics and chemistry.

learn from journeyworker plumbers, often working for different employers to gain knowledge about a variety of jobs.

High school or post-secondary courses in shop, plumbing, drafting, and physics provide good preparation.

#### Financial Aid

Grants, scholarships, loans, and work/study programs are available for college students. For most of this aid, prospective students must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, which is available from high school guidance offices and postsecondary financial aid offices.

For more information on federal financial aid programs, or to apply electronically, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov>.

On-the-job learning includes the use of plumbing tools and different types of pipes, and the safe handling of materials. Apprentices



For more information on federal financial aid programs, call (800) 4FEDAID

### FUTURE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The employment of plumbers is expected to grow at a constant rate through the year 2010.

Due to the lack of people

who are seeking training as plumbers, opportunities should be excellent. Well-trained workers will have especially favorable opportunities.

### WORK ENVIRONMENT

Plumbers work in commercial and residential settings where water and septic systems need to be

installed and maintained. They also may have to work outdoors in inclement weather.

### RESOURCES - HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

#### BOOK:

Plumbing Systems: Analysis, Design, and Construction by Tim Wentz

#### ONLINE:

[www.mcaa.org](http://www.mcaa.org)  
(Mechanical Contractors Association of America)

#### Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors

180 S. Washington St.  
P.O. Box 6808  
Falls Church, VA 22040  
[www.naphcc.org](http://www.naphcc.org)

#### LOCAL:

Career Counselor, Jeannell Copeland 941-751-7900 ext. 2017  
[copelandj@manateeschools.net](mailto:copelandj@manateeschools.net)

#### GENERAL:

National Association of

### YOU HAVE THE POWER

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### JOB IN THIS FIELD

| Job titles         | Place of work                                   | Kind of work   | Average salary*          |
|--------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| Apprentice plumber | Homes, schools, commercial buildings, classroom | Learns basic skills of plumbing on the job site and in class.  | \$7.00–\$12.00 (hourly)  |
| Plumber            | Homes, schools, commercial buildings            | Installs and repairs piping systems; cuts, bends, and joins pipes; installs fixtures and appliances. | \$14.00–\$30.00 (hourly) |

\*Salaries may vary depending on region and experience. Sources: Chronicle Guidance Publications and Occupational Outlook Handbook.