

NEWS BRIEF



New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission

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NEIWPC Northeast WWTF Labor Market Questionnaire

The New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPC) continues to pursue solutions to the labor shortage issue that many believe looms large on the horizon for wastewater treatment facilities in the Northeast. During the summer and fall of 2005 NEIWPC conducted a survey of wastewater treatment facilities in the region in an effort to collect real world labor market data to support the development of a workforce recruitment program in coordination with the Department of Labor's Job Corps program. The survey targeted wastewater treatment facilities in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont.

To ensure the broad dissemination of the survey, NEIWPC enlisted the assistance of several state agencies, the New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA), and the individual state wastewater associations. Facilities in Rhode Island and New York received electronic surveys via email in June, and surveys were distributed to facilities in the remaining states through their respective state wastewater associations. Decisions regarding delivery method were left up to the discretion of the individual associations and depending on their respective capabilities, included email or regular mail of the survey to facilities, and/or posting of the survey on association web sites.

Completed surveys were received from 123 facilities. Survey questions included general information regarding plant type and size, in addition to more focused questions about present workforce characteristics, current and future staffing needs, hiring procedures, and salary/benefits packages. The 123 facilities that responded collectively employ 1,177 workers in the Northeast region. Of these 123 facilities the highest percentage (44%) employ between 1 and 5 employees. Of the 1,177 employees,

the largest portion falls into the mid (39%) and senior (40%) level categories, with 31% of the employees over 51 years old. Of the 123 facilities responding, 112 included starting salary information for entry-level employees, which ranged from approximately \$17,000 to \$46,000.

Although the rate of response was lower than expected, the results provide a revealing snapshot of the state of the wastewater labor market in the Northeast. When considering the current age makeup of the industry, the high percentage of mid- and senior-level employees and employees over 51 years of age, and the expected number of vacancies in the next 5 years it is reasonable to conclude that there will be a significant demand for workers in this field in coming years. Furthermore, attractive entry-level salaries (averaging \$30,000) and benefits packages, the lack of recruitment programs (94% of responding facilities have no recruitment program), and the receptiveness of the facilities to hiring Job Corps graduates are all good signs for moving ahead with the NEIWPC/Job Corps wastewater program.

The results of this survey support the development of a wastewater treatment facility operator training program to bolster the number of qualified workers entering the field in the future. In the coming months, NEIWPC will continue to work in partnership with the Shriver Job Corps facility in Devens, MA to develop and establish a wastewater facility operator training program. NEIWPC will be looking for support from the wastewater industry to develop the curriculum and provide on the job training opportunities for the program.

NEIWPC staff will present the survey findings at the NEWEA 2006 Annual Conference (for more information visit www.newea.org).

Survey Results

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For more information on this survey, please contact Marianna Vulli (mvulli@neiwpc.org) or Tom Groves (tgroves@neiwpc.org) at NEIWPC 978-323-7929

Responses by State

Connecticut:	33
Maine:	20
Massachusetts:	10
New Hampshire:	18
New York:	28
Rhode Island:	6
Vermont:	8
Total	123

System Type

Conventional activated sludge	55	(44%)
Extended aeration	23	(19%)
Rotating biological contactor	10	(8%)
Sequencing batch reactor	7	(6%)
Other	28	(23%)
Total	123	

Design Flow Capacity (MGD)

< 0.5	24	(20%)
>0.5 to 1.0	15	(12%)
>1.0 to 5.0	45	(37%)
>5.0 to 10.0	19	(15%)
>10	19	(15%)
No Response	1	(<1%)
Total	123	

What is the total number of current employees at the WWTF?

1,177 employees at the 123 WWTF that responded.

Facilities with

1 to 5 employees	54	(44%)
6 to 10 employees	32	(26%)
11 to 20 employees	22	(18%)
21 + employees	15	(12%)
Total	123	

Of the total number of employees, what number are:

Entry-level	243	(21%)
Mid-level	455	(39%)
Senior-level	479	(40%)
Total	1,177	

What is the current age makeup of the facility's employees?

18-30	63	(5%)
31-40	250	(21%)
41-50	495	(43%)
51+	369	(31%)
Total	1,177	

Are there any current vacancies?

YES	32	(26%)
NO	91	(74%)
Total	123	

Will the WWTF need to replace staff in the next 5 years?

YES	78	(63%)
NO	45	(37%)
Total	123	

Will the WWTF need to increase its employee base in the next 5 years?

YES	25	(20%)
NO	98	(80%)
Total	123	

What is the starting annual salary for entry-level employees?

High	\$46,000	
Low	\$17,000	
\$10K to \$20K	7	(5%)
>\$20K to \$30K	55	(45%)
>\$30K to \$40K	38	(31%)
>\$40K	12	(10%)
No Response	11	(9%)
Total	123	

Is certification a requirement for being hired?

YES	41	(33%)
NO	82	(67%)
Total	123	

Does the WWTF have a recruitment program?

YES	7	(6%)
NO	116	(94%)
Total	123	

How would the WWTF consider a job application from a Job Corps wastewater training program graduate?

Favorably	92	(74%)
No-Difference	29	(24%)
Un-Favorably	1	(<1%)
No Response	1	(<1%)
Total	123	