

Boilermaker

Build and repair the boilers, tanks and pressure vessels inside refineries and power plants. Intense shutdown weeks, big overtime, then time off.

TYPICAL PAY

\$102,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$78k to \$114k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

3 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Refineries, power plants, pulp mills,
oil sands sites**

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Grade 12 with math and shop. Physical fitness matters.
- 2 Apply to a Boilermakers lodge** Months, sometimes longer
Lodge 128 covers Ontario, Lodge 146 covers Alberta, other lodges cover BC, the Prairies, Quebec and the Maritimes. Intake opens when work is busy. Welding experience or a welding certificate helps you get picked.
- 3 Register the apprenticeship** Days
The lodge registers you with the provincial trades authority, for example Skilled Trades Ontario or Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training.
- 4 Work and study** 3 to 4 years
In Ontario, 6,600 hours: 5,880 on the job, dispatched from the hall to shutdowns and construction jobs, plus 720 in school across three blocks of about 8 weeks. Alberta runs a 3-year, 3-period program. Rigging, welding, fitting and blueprint reading.
- 5 Certificate of Qualification and Red Seal** After your hours
Pass the exam. Boilermakers follow work between provinces more than almost any trade, so the Red Seal endorsement is nearly standard.

Pros and cons

- + One of the highest earning trades when the work is steady
- + Strong union: pension, benefits, wage set by contract
- + Weeks off between jobs that you can actually use
- Layoffs between shutdowns: income is lumpy and you must budget for it
- Confined spaces, heights, heat and fumes, every day
- Weeks away from home in camps and hotels

Optional boosts

Pressure welding certification. Rigging and crane signalling. Confined space and rescue training. Foreman and superintendent roles.

Good to know

The name is from steam boilers

The trade grew up building riveted steam boilers for locomotives and ships in the 1800s. The union, the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, says it was organized in 1880. Today the vessels are we...

A refinery down is money burning

A shut-down refinery or power plant loses a huge amount of money every day, so shutdown crews work around the clock in shifts and every hour of overtime is worth it to the owner.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Boilermakers, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Red Seal Program: Boilermaker

Skilled Trades Ontario: Construction Boilermaker (428A)

Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/boilermaker>



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