

Coast Guard Officer

Search and rescue, icebreaking and buoy tending on a federal ship. The training is four years and the government pays you to do it.

TYPICAL PAY

\$86,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$51k to \$150k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Coast Guard vessels, icebreakers, search and rescue stations, Arcti...

How you get there

- 1 High school with strong science** Grades 11 and 12
 You need a diploma by June 30 of the intake year, with at least 70% in physics, advanced or pre-calculus math, and English or French. The marine engineering stream also requires chemistry.
- 2 Apply through the Academy job posting** Months
 Applications open as a federal job posting. Expect testing, interviews, a medical and a security screening.
- 3 Pick a stream** At entry
 Marine navigation, which leads to the bridge, or marine engineering, which leads to the engine room.
- 4 Four years of alternating school and sea** 4 years
 The programme alternates months at the Academy on Cape Breton Island with months at sea aboard Coast Guard vessels.
- 5 Graduate as a fleet officer** After graduation
 You leave with a Bachelor of Technology in Nautical Sciences and a recognized commercial certificate of competency, and you are posted to a ship.

Pros and cons

- + A free degree, a professional licence and a salary during training
- + Federal pension, benefits and job security
- + Work that genuinely saves lives
- Four years on Cape Breton Island, far from most of the country
- Weeks or months at sea once you graduate
- Rescue work in bad weather is dangerous and sometimes ends badly

Optional boosts

Higher certificates of competency. Icebreaking and Arctic operations. Search and rescue specialization. Ashore with the federal government.

Good to know

The degree comes from Cape Breton University

Officer Training Program graduates receive a Bachelor of Technology in Nautical Sciences from Cape Breton University along with their Academy diploma and their certificate of competency.

It is civilian, not military

The Canadian Coast Guard sits inside Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Its officers are federal public servants, its vessels are not warships, and it does not carry out combat roles.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Coast Guard Vessel Chief Officer, wages (updated Nov 2025)
 Canadian Coast Guard Academy
 Canadian Coast Guard Academy: Officer Training Program prospectus
 Transport Canada: Seafarer certification

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/coast-guard-officer>



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