

Boilermaker

Build and repair the huge steel vessels that hold steam and pressure, in power plants, refineries and shipyards.

TYPICAL PAY

\$76,410

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$50k to \$110k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Power plants, refineries, shipyards,
paper mills, construction sites**

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or an equivalency certificate** Grade 12
Shop, welding and math classes help. You need to be 18 and pass a drug test and a physical.
- 2 Apply to a local apprenticeship** Weeks to a year of waiting
Applications open in windows, not all year. Local lodges of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers run the main programs, and there are open shop programs too.
- 3 Get indentured and start work** Immediately
You are a paid employee from the first day, working alongside qualified boilermakers.
- 4 Work plus classroom training** About 4 years
Registered apprenticeships run on a minimum of about 2,000 hours of paid work plus roughly 144 hours of classroom instruction a year.
- 5 Journeyman boilermaker** After the hours
Finish your hours, pass your welding tests, and you are qualified nationwide.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from the first day, no tuition debt
- + Among the best pensions in the trades
- + Overtime can push earnings well past the median
- Confined spaces, heights, heat and noise every day
- Long stretches away from home chasing work
- Employment is expected to decline as coal plants close

Good to know

The union is older than the light bulb business

The International Brotherhood of Boilermakers traces its founding to 1880, back when boilers powered almost every factory, ship and locomotive in the country.

The job is named after something almost nobody builds an...

Steam boilers are still made, but a lot of modern boilermaker work is on pressure vessels, storage tanks, refinery equipment and pollution control systems. The name stuck long after the work changed.

Optional boosts

Extra welding qualifications. Rigging and crane signaling. Inspection training. Foreman and supervisor courses.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Boilermakers
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers
Boilermakers National Apprenticeship Program
Apprenticeship.gov, the federal Registered Apprenticeship site

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/boilermaker>



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