

Environmental Technician

Take the samples, run the gear, clean up the spill. Two years of school and you are on site.

TYPICAL PAY

\$59,920

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$40k to \$97k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Field sites, laboratories, treatment plants, consulting firms

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Chemistry, biology and math. Shop or electronics classes help more than people expect, because you will be running equipment.
- 2 Associate degree or certificate** 1 to 2 years
A two-year environmental technology program at a community college, with lab and field work built in. Austin Community College in Texas is one example, and most states have several.
- 3 Safety training** 1 week
The 40-hour hazardous waste operations course, plus first aid and CPR. Many programs include it.
- 4 First job** Hired on
Consulting firm, testing lab, treatment plant, or a government agency. Expect to be the one carrying the cooler for a while.
- 5 Add tickets and experience** Ongoing
Confined space, emergency response, water operator licensing. Each one widens the jobs you can take.

Pros and cons

- + Working in a science field within two years, for very little money
- + Outdoors, hands-on, different site most weeks
- + Overtime and travel pay can add a lot to the base
- The federal outlook for this job is below average, so openings are not everywhere
- Real exposure risk, which is why the safety training is so strict
- Early starts, long drives, bad weather

Optional boosts

Hazardous waste operations and emergency response. Water or wastewater operator license. Confined space and respirator training. Commercial driver's license.

Good to know

Forty hours before you touch a cleanup site

Federal safety rules require 40 hours of classroom training and supervised field days before a worker can go on a hazardous waste site, then an 8-hour refresher every year. It is the most common gate...

The paperwork is the evidence

Every sample carries a chain of custody form recording each person who handled it. If the chain is broken, the result cannot be used in a permit or a court case no matter how carefully the lab measured it.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Environmental Engineering Technologists and Technicians (17-3025.00)

ABET: accreditation, including engineering technology programs

Austin Community College: environmental science and technology

Environmental Protection Agency: careers

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/environmental-technician>



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