

Sprinkler Fitter

You install and test the pipes and sprinkler heads that stop a building fire spreading. Paid apprenticeship, no college debt.

TYPICAL PAY

\$63,800

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$44k to \$108k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Construction sites, high rise buildings, warehouses, hospitals,...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or GED (General Educational Development certificate)** Grade 12
Algebra and shop classes are what programs actually look at. You also need to be 18 and able to pass a drug test and a physical.
- 2 Get accepted into a registered apprenticeship** Weeks to a year of waiting
Either through a union local or a fire protection contractor that runs its own program. This is the hard step, and intakes are often once a year.
- 3 Work and study together** 4 to 5 years
Roughly 2,000 hours a year on the job plus about 144 hours of classroom instruction a year, which is the standard shape of a registered apprenticeship.
- 4 Finish as a journeyman** After your hours
You have logged 8,000 or so hours of installing, testing and servicing systems and you can now work unsupervised.
- 5 Add certification and licensing** Ongoing
NICET (National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies) certification for layout and inspection work, plus whatever license your state requires.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from day one, and you finish with no tuition debt
- + Union pension and health cover on most commercial work
- + The work is legally required, so inspection and testing never stops
- Overhead work wrecks shoulders and necks over a long career
- Unheated buildings in winter and hot roofs in summer
- New construction slows down in a recession

Optional boosts

NICET (National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies) water-based systems layout. Inspection and testing of water-based systems. Welding certifications. Special hazards systems.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Plumbers, Pipefitters and Steamfitters (47-2152.00)
United Association of plumbers, pipefitters, sprinkler fitters and welders
National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies
Texas Department of Insurance: fire sprinkler licensing

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/sprinkler-fitter>

Good to know

Sprinklers do not all go off at once

Films show a whole ceiling emptying when someone holds a lighter up. In a real system each head opens on its own, when a liquid filled glass bulb or a metal link at that head is heated enough to break. Most fire...

One rulebook sits behind the whole trade

NFPA 13 (the National Fire Protection Association standard for installing sprinkler systems) sets out how systems must be designed and built, and a companion standard covers how they are inspected...



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