

Stationary Engineer

Run the boilers, chillers and pumps that keep a hospital, a campus or a factory alive. Learn most of it on the job.

TYPICAL PAY

\$78,620

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$51k to \$125k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospitals, universities, office towers, factories, power plants

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or an equivalency certificate** Grade 12
 Math, physics, chemistry and any shop class. You need to read gauges, do arithmetic under pressure and follow written procedures.
- 2 Get in the door** Weeks to months
 Entry titles are boiler tender, plant helper, utility operator or assistant building engineer. Hospitals, universities and large office buildings hire at this level.
- 3 Long-term on-the-job training** 1 to 4 years
 You start on monitoring and rounds, then move to valves, pumps, water chemistry and repairs under a licensed engineer.
- 4 Or a registered apprenticeship** About 4 years
 Some employers and locals of the International Union of Operating Engineers run a four year apprenticeship of about 8,000 paid hours on the job plus around 600 hours of classroom time.
- 5 License up, grade by grade** Ongoing
 Where the work is licensed, you sit an exam for a low grade license, gain hours, then test again for a higher grade until you can be a chief engineer.

Pros and cons

- + Paid while you learn, with little or no tuition
- + Steady indoor work that does not stop in a recession
- + Public and institutional employers still offer pensions
- Nights, weekends and holidays, often on rotation
- Licensing is city by city, so moving can mean testing again
- Long boring hours broken by sudden high-pressure problems

Optional boosts

A higher grade boiler license. Refrigeration and chiller operator license. HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) controls training. Water treatment certification.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Stationary Engineers and Boiler Operators
 Bureau of Labor Statistics: Stationary Engineers and Boiler Operators
 International Union of Operating Engineers
 New York City Department of Buildings: High Pressure Boiler Operating Engineer license

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/stationary-engineer>

Good to know

The job title is older than the power grid

The International Union of Operating Engineers was founded in 1896, when almost every factory in the country ran on a steam engine that somebody had to sit with all day. The union still represents stationar...

Most openings come from retirements

Federal projections put employment growth at about 3 percent over the decade to 2035, with roughly 3,200 openings a year. Nearly all of them come from people retiring rather than new positions being crea...



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