

# WATER WORKFORCE WEBINAR SERIES

#### **Veterans in the Water Workforce**

### Office of Wastewater Management

Office of Water U.S. Environmental Protection Agency February 29, 2023

# We will start in a couple minutes. Thank you.



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### Office of Wastewater Management

Office of Water U.S. Environmental Protection Agency February 29, 2024

This webinar is sponsored by EPA's Office of Wastewater Management. The opinions expressed in this webinar are those of the guest speaker(s). They do not reflect EPA policy, endorsement, or action, and EPA does not verify the accuracy or science of the contents of the presentation.

## Webinar Logistics

- This webinar is being recorded
- Participants will be in listen-only mode
- To submit a question, use the Q&A function



• Webinar slides and recording information will be sent out to all participants following the webinar

### Water Sector Workforce at EPA

- Reminders:
  - Check out our website for resources and updates: <u>https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/water-sector-workforce</u>
    - Workforce Initiative
    - Past Workforce Webinars
    - Workforce Case Studies
  - Stay tuned for information on our next webinar. If you are registered for this webinar you are automatically on the email list for future webinars!

## Having Audio Difficulties?

- Call in to any of these phone numbers:
- +1 669 254 5252
- +1 669 216 1590
- +1 646 828 7666
- +1 551 285 1373

### Webinar ID: 161 644 4163

# Opening Poll: Please indicate the sector that you work in:

- Utility
- State or Local Government
- Federal Government
- Consultant
- Academia/Educator
- Military/Veterans
- Other

February 29, 2024

# Veterans in the Water Workforce

Jim Horne, Sustainable Utilities Program Manager, U.S. EPA Office of Wastewater Management

United States Environmental Protection













#### CREATING THE WATER WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE WEBINAR SERIES

#### Veterans in the Water Workforce

As part of EPA's commitment to helping build a diverse and sustainable water workforce, today's veterans can provide a very important set of skills as well as benefit from a range of programs designed to help them build a meaningful career in water. Please join us on February 29<sup>th</sup> to hear from organizations that are reaching out to and training these veterans so they can play a key role in protecting our nation's critical water infrastructure.

This webinar is part of an ongoing webinar series hosted by EPA, in partnership with leading water sector organizations around the country. More information on this webinar series can be found at <a href="https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/water-sector-workforce-webinars">https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/water-sector-workforce-webinars</a>

#### ATTENDANCE IS FREE – REGISTER NOW! Register at: https://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN\_luPc10oqS0CiEcHDPVNkcA

#### FEBRUARY 29, 2024 12:00 – 1:30 PM Eastern Time

#### Moderators:

O Jim Horne, U.S. EPA

#### Speakers:

- Freddy Armijo, Project Manager and Physical Security Officer, City of Riverside (CA) Public Utilities Water Division
- Don Jones, Water/Wastewater
   Technology Program Coordinator,
   Cuyamaca College
- Steven Garner, Director of Certification, California-Nevada Section AWWA
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Presenter TBD





#### February 29, 2024

### **Speakers:**

**Freddy Armijo**, Project Manager and Physical Security Officer, City of Riverside (CA) Public Utilities Water Division

Don Jones, Center for Water Studies, Cuyamaca College

**Steven Garner,** Director of Certification, California-Nevada Section AWWA

**Timothy Johnston,** Supervisor of Employment Services, Veteran Readiness and Employment, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Webinar slides and recording will be sent to registrants within a week after the webinar.

# VETERANS IN THE WATER WORKFORCE

VETERANS ENGAGEMENT & TRANSITION COMMITTEE CA-NV AWWA



### FREDDY ARMIJO

- Chair for the VET Committee CA-NV AWWA
- Project Manager and Physical Security Officer with City of Riverside Public Utilities
- United States Marine Corps Veteran: 24 years Master Sergeant Combat Engineer – Retired 2018/2019



#### WHAT IS THE UPSIDE FOR ORGANIZATIONS?

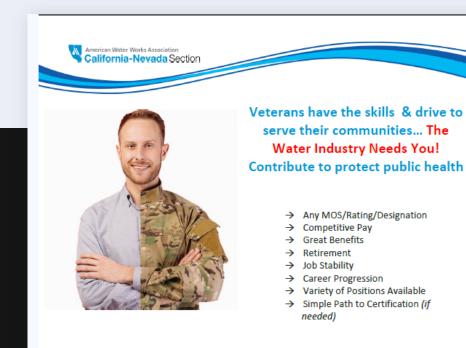
Skills that have been developed and tested for at least 4 years

- 1. Leadership
- 2. Accountability
- 3. Teamwork
- 4. Initiative
- 5. Self-motivation
- 6. Purpose of serving of others
- 7. Specialty skills : Safety, Hazmat, Trainers, Equipment licenses, MOS/Designator specialties

#### WHAT IS THE UPSIDE FOR VETERANS?

National organizations: Public and Private

- 1. Service oriented organizations
- 2. Career openings in all categories from hands-on to white collar
- 3. Graying force
- 4. Benefits



#### Click here to watch the experience of veterans currently in the water industry

WARRIORS TO WATERWORKS VIDEO

If you have questions on getting started in your new career, contact veterans & volunteers from California-Nevada Section, AWWA Veterans Engagement & Transition Committee

Freddy Armijo, Riverside Public Utilities – <u>farmijo@riversideca.gov</u> Jose Martinez, Otay Water District – <u>jose.martinez@otaywater.gov</u> Cristin Goldman, Golden State Water Company – <u>cristin.goldman@gswater.com</u> Steven Garner, CA-NV AWWA – <u>sgarner@ca-nv-awwa.org</u>

#### Military Job Translator Link

Water Industry Job Postings Link

www.ca-nv-awwa.org

### Challenges

- Information
- Certifications
- Training
- Networking Opportunities
- "the in" : Skill bridge

### Skill Bridge – Success Story

- Ryan Brauner, Retired U.S. Air Force 2022; Civil Engineer Craftsman
- American States Utility Services Skill Bridge Intern
  Jan 2022 – May 2022 |
- Hired Dec 2023

- What it is?
  - DOD Program for transitioning military members
  - Military member still assigned to unit (paid normal duty pay), but is approved by command to intern with DOD sanctioned industry partner
  - Can apply for up to 180 days Skill Bridge to be used during last 6 months of service
- Keys to success
  - Start early!
  - Have professional resume prepared
  - Brush up interview skills
  - Network
  - Breath
  - Be yourself!



## Questions?

### Efforts to Collaboratively Recruit, Train, and Hire the Next Generation of Waterworks Industry Professionals in the San Diego Region

#### EPA Water Sector Workforce Development Webinar February 29th 2024

Presenter

Don Jones Warriors2WaterWorks Campaign Coordinator Center for Water Studies at Cuyamaca College



- Carlsbad Desalinization Plant 50 MGD
- SDCWA \$3 Billion CIP Projects
- City of San Diego Pure Water Program
  - 50% of Drinking Water Recycled Wastewater by 2035
- New STEM Technologies
- 5-600+ Job Openings/Year for next 3-5 years
- We are working <u>collaboratively</u> to face these issues



An Industry and Career That Make a Difference!







# WATER WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS

### "The Silver Tsunami"



- We are rapidly losing the experts who have operated & maintained our systems for decades
- Critical skills & organizational knowledge being lost
- 3%\* Lowest unemployment rate in 30 year- shortage of quality candidates with proper skills & certifications
- High Demand/Low Supply means employers need to be creative & change how they recruit and hire
  - New equipment & technologies = higher level skills
  - Identifying, recruiting & training the next generation of water industry professionals is vital to all of us
  - There is an acute shortage of job seekers who have the strong mechanical, electrical, electronic, & troubleshooting that are critical in our field operations





#### In today's recruitment and hiring environment, we need to **COMPETE** for top quality talent!







### **OUR REGIONAL WORKFORCE**

- 2018 San Diego Regional Survey 50 Agencies
- 4,500+ Water & Wastewater Jobs in SD Region
  - Over 40% are over age 50
- 12-20+% Avg. Annual Turnover
  - 600+/- Vacancies in County per Year
- 50,000+/- Industry Jobs Statewide
  - 4,500+ Vacancies per Year











### SD REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TASKFORCE

- Formed in 2018, Regional Consortium of volunteer General Managers, and stakeholders from local colleges.
- Goal: Ensure the San Diego region will have the workforce to fill mission critical positions in the water industry.









### **TASKFORCE OBJECTIVES**

- Support water agencies in the San Diego region through consolidated outreach and resources.
- Develop qualified candidates for mission critical positions in the water industry through consolidated recruitment and outreach.
- Build awareness of the water industry through outreach to high schools and K-12.
- Recruit and support veterans and transitioning military through internships, cooperative work experiences, and other resources.









### **MILITARY WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS**

- Nearly 1/8<sup>th</sup> of all active duty personnel serving stateside are stationed California
- 8 Bases -140K+ in San Diego County
   Additional 20+K serving in Reserve and National Guard units
- 15K+/- Leave active duty in our region per year
- Reliability & responsibility
- Great hands on training & STEM skills
- Adaptability to improvise under tough conditions
- Follow Orders, Document Actions
- Strong leadership skills



**PERFECT FIT FOR WATERWORKS INDUSTRY** 



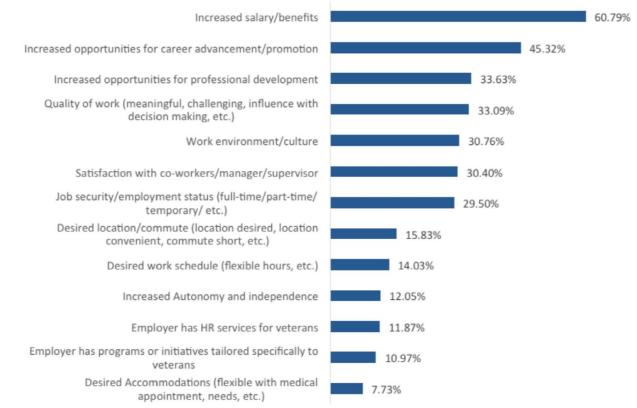




### TRANSITIONING MILITARY

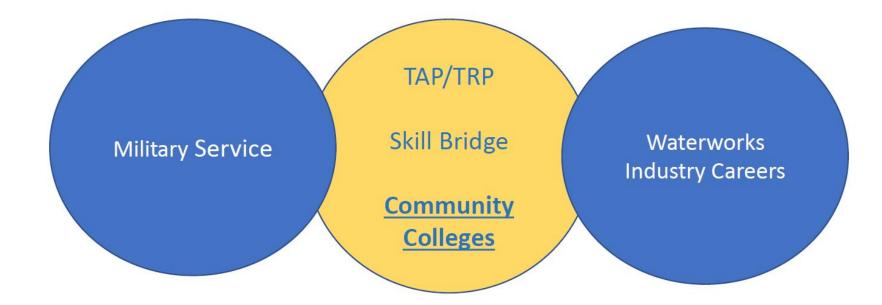
#### Figure 4. Reason(S) Which Would Have Stayed at First Post-Military Job

- 50% turnover of veterans for first post military employment.\*
- Career opportunities in waterworks industry address virtually all top turnover issues!



\*2016 Syracuse University / Institute for Veterans and Military Families Study

# **"SMOOTH TRANSITION"**





## **COMMUNITY COLLEGES ARE A KEY RESOURCE**

#### Largest Higher Education System in the World

- 1,200 colleges nationwide
- 11.7 million students
- 2/3rds taking credit classes
- ♦ 625K Degrees & 340K Certificates conferred yearly

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- AKA Junior Colleges,
- Community Colleges,
- Career Technical Colleges

### Focus on Mid-Skills

- 53% jobs require mid-skills & growing
- ♦ 43% workforce have these skills

### Students

- ♦ 60% part time
- ♦ 40% full time
- Average age 29 yrs



#### Average Tuition

\$2,400 per year (full load)





### **CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM**

#### 115 Campuses 2.1 M Students

- 100+ Yr. History of Technical Education & Training
  - \$400M per year for Strong Workforce programs
- Open Enrollment Low or No Cost to Attend Second Second
- Focus on Local Community Workforce Needs
- Career Pathways High School to Community College to Jobs
- Night Courses offered Less Employer Scheduling Conflicts
- Traditional, Online, or HY-FLEX class formats
- **Established Internship & Co-op Work Experience Programs**
- Articulation to many 4 year institutions







### **CENTER FOR WATER STUDIES**

**CUYAMACA COLLEGE** 

- Oldest and most comprehensive Water/Wastewater Technology Program
  - Currently offer 30 courses leading to Certificates and/or Degrees in 7 Areas of Specialization
  - Just added Advanced Water Treatment Operator Certificate/Degree Specialization
- Full Time Program Coordinator/Lead Instructor plus 10 Adjunct Instructors
  - Faculty has 350+ years of water industry experience
  - Currently recruiting 2<sup>nd</sup> F/T instructor
- **250+/-** students 12-14 courses offered per semester
- Courses offered online, traditional, or HY-FLEX formats
- Recognized as one of the premier programs in Western US



- Only California Community College AWWA Student Chapter
- Strong Collaboration with Waterworks Industry and Employers



## **INDUSTRY-RELEVANT FACILITIES**



- Two Traditional Classrooms
- Water Quality Laboratory
- Backflow, Pumps & Valves Shop
- Cutaways & Simulators













- Fully Operational Distribution System SCADA
- Wide Variety of Pipe, Fittings & Valves
- Hands On Skill Building
- Wastewater Collection System

**Total Investment - \$400K** \$200K+ Donations from Industry

## **MILITARY OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT**

### **Hiring Transitioning Military & Veterans**

- Great Hi-Tech/STEM Aptitudes
- Supervisory & Leadership Skills
- Workforce Diversity 20-25% are Women
- Many Skills Directly Transferable
- Honor Service to Country by Providing Great Post-Military Career Opportunities







RECRUITING, HIRING, & RETAINING VETERANS





### **TRANSFERABLE MILITARY SKILLS & APTITUDES**

- Water & Wastewater Support Technician
- Pneumatic, Hydraulic, Electrical Systems
- Utilities Systems
- Power & Propulsion Systems
- Electronics & Electronic/Mechanical Interface
- Fire Control (SCADA)
- Preventative Maintenance Specialist
- Construction Trades/Heavy Equipment Operation
- Computer Information Systems/Cyber Security
- Boiler Operation & Maintenance
- Electronics Maintenance
- Electrician

- **Welder**
- Mechanic
- Machinist
- Damage Control Specialist
- Small Craft Mechanic
- Engineering Equipment Operator
- Engineering Aide
- Preventative Maintenance Technician
- Planning, Logistics & Supply Maximo
- Avionics Maintenance
- Operations Specialist
- Data Systems Technician

#### **Plus Dozens More**



Personnel who can analyze, improvise, problem solve, & LEAD under pressure!



### Warriors2WaterWorks Recruitment Campaign Goals

- Market Water Industry Career Opportunities to Transitioning Military & Veterans
- Coordinate Recruitment & Career Preparation with Industry Partners
- Build a Bridge Between Military & the Industry
  - SDVC Coalition of 165 NGO's
  - SD MAC Military/Industry Forum
  - US Dept. of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Service
- Establish "Recruiting Beachheads" at Military Bases
  - Collaborate with TAP, TRP, Command Career Counselors



### ARRIORS2 ATERWORKS CONTINUING TO SERVE

- Targeted Marketing & Outreach
  - Brochures & Flyers
  - Website Resources
  - TAP & TRP Programs
  - Reserve and Guard Units
  - Social Media Linked In
- Expanded Veterans Center
- Attended Military Job Fairs
- Hosted Annual Warriors2WaterWorks Military Career Day
- Produced Recruitment Videos
  - Showcasing Industry Opportunities & Fit
- CENTER for WATER STUDIES at Consumaria College
- www.sdwaterstories.com

Increasing Industry Awareness











### **LESSONS LEARNED - GETTING STARTED**

#### Work **collaboratively** with:

- Other water/wastewater agencies in your area
- Workforce Investment Boards & Regional Career Centers
- Industry Assn's AWWA, WEF, APWA, CWEA, ACWA, etc.
- Military commands & veterans groups
  - National Guard, Reserve Units, Vets Services Org's, VFW
- Make your organization more veteran friendly
  - Have a veterans information page on your website
  - Solicit information about military service on job application
  - Include veterans on your screening and interview panels
  - Carefully evaluate military training & experience Military Transition Resources
- Find educational partners
  - Community Colleges



### **BE PROACTIVE !!**





# Workforce Webinar Series: Transforming the Water Workforce

Steven Garner, Director of Certification CA-NV AWWA 916.798.0220 sgarner@ca-nv-awwa.org

# Veterans in the Water Industry

#### Many veterans work in the water industry

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 10% of workers in water & wastewater utilities are veterans

#### Veterans possess useful skills for the water industry

Skills like teamwork, attention to detail, and ability to follow procedures are valuable in water treatment roles

### Veterans can benefit from water industry jobs



Photo courtesy of NEWEA & WEF

Stable government water jobs provide continuity, good benefits, and a sense of ongoing service for veterans



The water industry provides an excellent opportunity for veterans to continue serving their communities!

Photo courtesy of thewaternetwork.com Content courtesy of beautiful.ai

# Military Training and Experience Similarities with the Water and Wastewater Industry

- Mission Focused
- Teamwork
- Chain of Command
- Focus on Service
- Crisis and Risk Management
- Training
- Decision Making
- Community Involvement

Successful military experience involves a deep appreciation for regulations. Service members lived it every day!

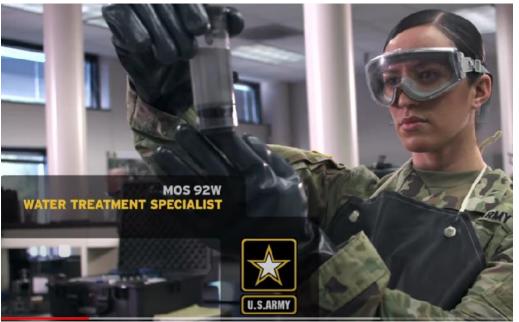


Photo courtesy of Army MOS 92W Water Treatment Specialist (youtube.com) Content courtesy of NEWEA

US Water Alliance

Making the Water Sector an Employer of Choice: Public Opinion and Messaging Research Findings





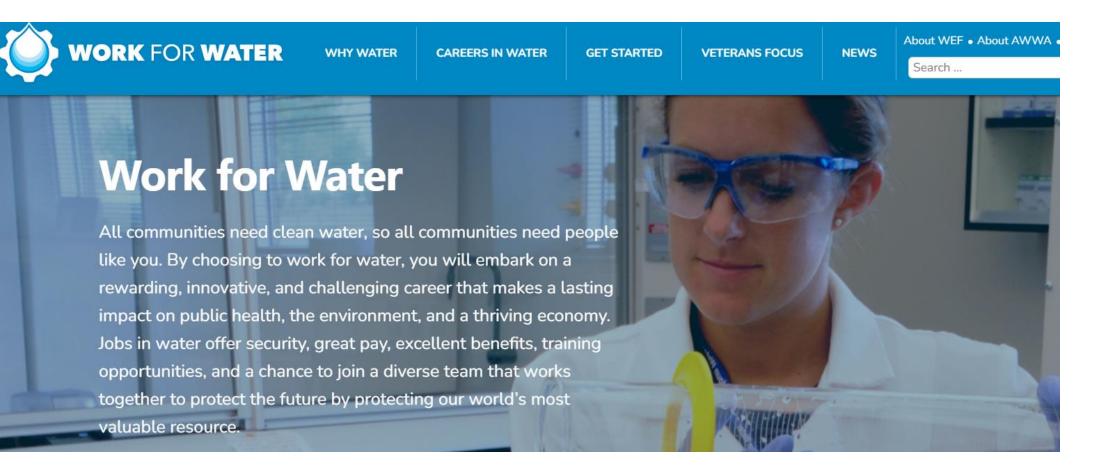
RECRUITING, HIRING RETAINING VETERANS

American Water Works Association (AWWA) Resources

- <u>https://www.awwa.org/Resources-Tools/Resource-</u> <u>Topics/Workforce/Veterans</u>
- <u>https://www.awwa.org/Portals/0/AWWA/ETS/Resources/EmployerToolkit080119.pdf?ver=2019-08-01-143735-380</u>

#### Work for Water AWWA & Water Environment Federation (WEF)

https://www.workforwater.org/



### **CA-NV AWWA Resources**

<u>Military Job Translators (basecamp.com)</u> https://public.3.basecamp.com/p/9WkyZJM4s2hjqwzFPFwKvGXS

Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition (SCADA) or Instrumentation Technician / Electronics Technician



Photo courtesy of Navy

# New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA) resources

#### Water Warriors Video

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1e\_nGo18q7db7gdp3Lrq3TT8O8SyhnZ43/view?pli=1 ~8 minute version

https://vimeo.com/user57485243/review/848142594/bd1bd8e4e9 ~5 min version





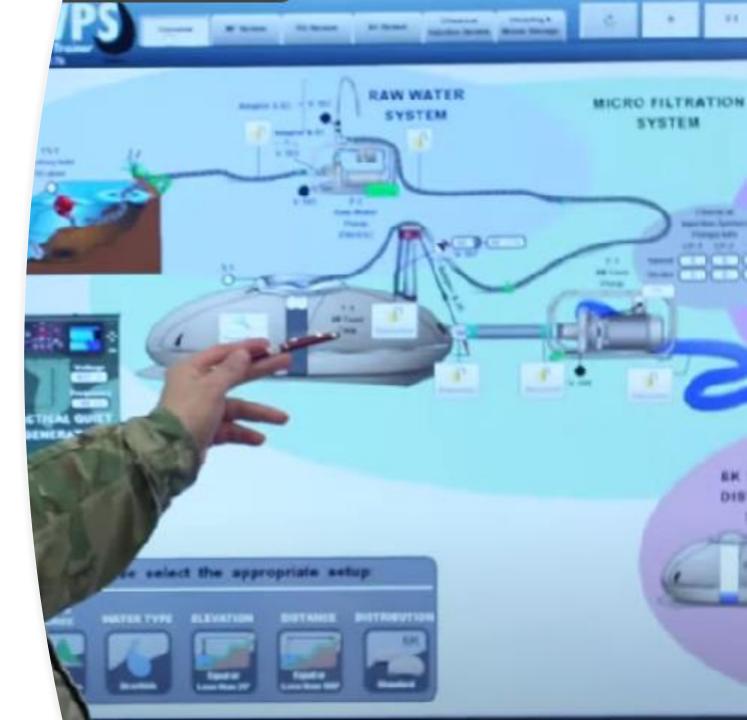
Video snippets courtesy of NEWEA

#### Federal & State Resources

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) From M.O.S. to J-O-B: A Guide for Applying Occupational Specialties (M.O.S.) to Civilian Drinking and Wastewater Operations (epa.gov)

State of California AB1588 provides accommodations for military education & experience

American Council on Education (ACE) - Military Occupation, Education and Experience Guide https://militaryguide.acenet.edu/



#### Safe Drinking Water Restored to All 19 Zones on Navy Water System 18 March 2022



Photo courtesy of www.navy.mil

Safe Drinking Water Restored to All 19 Zones on Navy Water System > United States Navy > News Stories

#### Timothy Johnston-Supervisor of Employment Services for VR&E

VETERAN READINESS & EMPLOYMENT Empower. Achieve. Succee



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

February 2024

Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E) is a comprehensive program that assist Veterans and transitioning Service members with at least a 10% service-connected disabilities rating to prepare for, find and maintain suitable employment.





VR&E Service employs approximately 75 Employment Coordinators (EC) nationwide. They play a vital role in assisting Veterans to achieve their employment goals. EC's are tasked with establishing relationships with employers to assist in staffing and meeting their workforce needs.





We work with our VR&E participants to create a plan needed to gain employment or live more independently in their home or community through the following five tracks:

- 1. Reemployment
- 2. Rapid Access to Employment
- 3. Self-Employment
- 4. Employment Through Long-Term Services
- 5. Independent Living





Employers can use some of the following VR&E programs as a tool to recruit transitioning Service members and Veterans.

- On-the-job and Apprenticeship Training Programs
- Special Employer Incentive Program (SEI) (Private, Nonprofit employers only)
- Non-Paid Work Experience Program (NPWE)





Non-Paid Work Experience Program (NPWE) Memorandum of Agreement with EPA (2020)

#### **BENEFITS TO THE EMPLOYER**

- The employer incurs no cost.
- Participant does not count toward the partnering agency's number of full-time employees (FTE).
- Obtains a well-trained and diverse job-ready candidate.
- Federal employers may use Special Hiring Authorities to directly hire NPWE participants without competitive recruitment.
- VR&E can offer reasonable accommodations without additional costs to the partnering agency.

#### **BENEFITS TO THE VETERAN**

- Receives an opportunity to work in governmental agency with a strong chance of becoming employed
- Receives a monthly stipend while in the program, just like they would if they were in a traditional training facility.
- Opportunity too network in the agency for other employment opportunities if available
- Obtained employment references and letters of recommendation.





On the Job Training and Apprenticeships https://inquiry.vba.va.gov/weamspub/buildSearchCountryCriteria.do Web Enabled Approval Management System (WEAMS)



#### GI Bill Comparison Tool

https://www.va.gov/gi-bill-comparison-tool

Search by name	Search by location	
School, employer, or training provider		
school, employer, or training provider		

Showing 2 search results for "ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT"

Update tuition and housing + estimates	On-the-job training / Apprenticeship	On-the-job training / Apprenticeship	
Filter your results –	ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT	IRONTON WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT IRONTON, OH	
Type of institution	ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, MD	You may be eligible for up to:	
Specialized mission (i.e., Single-gender, Religious affiliation, HBCU) Historically Black Colleges and	You may be eligible for up to: Tuition benefit: Housing benefit: N/A \$2,142 /mo* * Housing rate and the amount of entitlement used	Tuition benefit:       Housing benefit:         N/A       \$1,302 /mo*         * Housing rate and the amount of entitlement used decrease every 6 months as training progresses	
Universities	decrease every 6 months as training progresses Accreditation: GI Bill students:	Accreditation: GI Bill students: N/A 0	





- Veterans who have at least a 10% service connected disability and in need of obtaining employment should apply at <u>https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/apply</u>
- Employers who are interested in utilizing the Dept of Veterans Affairs, Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E), Employment Services can Email: <u>EmploySpec.VBACO@va.gov</u>





# **QUESTIONS?**





# Q&A Session

Webinar slides and recording will be sent to registrants in the next week.





On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the best score and 1 being the worst, how would you rate today's webinar?

### Thank you!

United States Environmental Protection Agency



American Water Works Association







