



MISSION-CRITICAL PROFILE

Name: James Sparks

Organization: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Job Category (Check one below):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water Treatment | <input type="checkbox"/> Electronic Maintenance Technician/ Instrument Technician |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water Distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrician/Electrical Line Worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wastewater Treatment | <input type="checkbox"/> Machinist/Mechanic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wastewater Distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

1. Please describe the work you do:

I work at the Sunol Valley Chlorination Facility. I am an operator who is responsible for ensuring water treatment. For example, I make sure that chemical dosage is correct and our water quality remains pristine.

2. What combination of education, vocational training, apprenticeship, experience, and/or skill did you obtain in order to be qualified and selected for your job?

I have a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Management from Clark Atlanta University. I started as a 9910 Public Service Trainee at the Southeast Wastewater Plant for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Wastewater Enterprise. I then tested at Local 39 and was able to enter the union's stationary engineering apprenticeship program. After being accepted into the program, I became a Water Treatment Apprentice for San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's Water Enterprise. During this time I have been working full-time while still attending school two nights a week for three hours each night.

3. What do you like best about your job?

I like the responsibility of providing safe drinking water for over 2.5 million people. I like the team atmosphere of operators coming together for a common goal.

4. Please tell us about the projects and activities you have enjoyed most in your work in the water/wastewater field, and what made them rewarding.

One project I had fun with was during a system shutdown that occurred during our water system improvement projects. We had to deal with lock-out/tag-out procedures and worker safety. I was working at Pulgas Chlorination Facility and we needed to balance water from various sources in the transmission system in order to maintain water supply to the City without allowing any overflow into the Upper Crystal Springs Reservoir.

5. What qualities and capabilities are needed in order for a person in your area of expertise to be successful in the water/wastewater industry?

Willingness to make safe, smart decision during critical times. Continued education in water treatment to pursue higher water treatment certifications. Ability to work with others (other water treatment operators, engineers, trades, etc.)

6. Do you have any advice for an individual who is considering pursuing a career in your field in the water/wastewater industry?

Learn where your tap water comes from. From there you can get a sense of what needs to be done to get that water to you. Learn what it takes to provide water to the public. Take advantage of the many informational resources that the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission provides.