

MISSION-CRITICAL PROFILE

Name: Melissa Lovallo

Organization: City of Hayward

Job Category (Check one below):

- | | |
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| <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wastewater Treatment | <input type="checkbox"/> Machinist/Mechanic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wastewater Collections | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

1. Please describe the work you do:

I am an operator-in-training. My duties are to learn the daily plant operations, piping, strategies, etc. I do daily station checks, look for inconsistencies in equipment, de-rag equipment, maintain flows, lab work and special projects.

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 worked as a machine operator for a private company where I learned about machinery and how to maintain production/flow. I also took wastewater classes at community college as well as correspondence courses through CSU Sacramento. I took and passed the Grade I Operator Certification exam.

3. What do you like best about your job?

I always wanted a career where I felt I made a difference in the world. Wastewater treatment, in my opinion, is the most important public service. Without wastewater treatment, our natural bodies of water would be contaminated, causing adverse conditions to our environment as well as public health. I am excited to be part of a movement towards a cleaner, healthier world.

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,

Even though I am still new to the field, I am constantly being involved in projects that allow me to give personal feedback. I work on projects of importance in the fields of plant safety and facilitating operations. I enjoy being a part of something larger, and being allowed to give personal input when it comes to important matters.

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?

To be successful in the water/wastewater field you need to be persistent, you should try to make yourself competitive by earning certificates and taking classes in science, math and water/wastewater. A wastewater operator should be mechanically inclined, have an understanding of science (biology/chemistry) and have the ability and desire to learn.

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

Never give up if that what you truly want. I couldn't see myself in any career other than wastewater. I received many rejection letters in the mail, but did not give up and four years after beginning my job search, I finally was hired. Some people also intern at plants to earn their initial required hours for certification. The State Water Resources Control Board website is a good resource for those starting their search.