

## MISSION-CRITICAL PROFILE

**Name:** Matt Woodworth

**Organization:** North Coast County Water District

**Job Category (Check one below):**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water Treatment    | <input type="checkbox"/> Electronic Maintenance Technician/ Instrument Technician |
| <input checked="" 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 for a water district responsible for maintaining an efficient water distribution system. We have a system that has begun to show its age therefore, equipment such as water meters and fire hydrants are being updated frequently. Some of the work that I do includes replacing old pipe with new ductile iron pipe ranging from 4" up to 24" in diameter, copper service lines and corroded pipe saddle connections. I also find myself operating heavy machinery and using pneumatic equipment such as a jack hammers and chipping hammers which are just some of the tools that are used to expose underground pipelines. Major projects and water main breaks require a great deal of equipment, machinery and pipeline to be transported to the site. Knowing the necessary equipment for the job and transporting the correct equipment are important contributory aspects to a project moving ahead smoothly. Customer service is also a highly regarded area in the industry, involving meter reading and responding to various customer needs. Re-landscaping residential areas and sidewalk replacement destroyed by leaks are highly appreciated services that we perform to maintain a high level of customer satisfaction.

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?

As far as education is concerned you only need to earn a high school diploma or GED equivalent to get an entry level job. Regarding prior experience it is important that you have had jobs in the past where you have had to work as a team in order to complete arduous tasks. It really helps to have great communication skills and the enthusiasm if you want to become a valued employee. This is a strenuous job that has us in constant motion. The first year will feel overwhelming and exhausting but you will succeed if you maintain a great attitude.

3. What do you like best about your job?

There are many parts of employment in the water industry that I find appealing. When you become an employee in this industry you are beginning a career. By this I mean you will be given the opportunities for future promotions and salary increase as well as potential employment opportunities in other areas of this vast complex industry. Working in this industry I have felt very physically fit with a high energy level in comparison to my desk jobs of the past. As I said earlier, this job is physically demanding and you want to remain healthy and fit in order to prevent injuries. Medical, dental and retirement benefits may not seem important to you now but these will be of great value to you later in life. It is very rare for employers to offer benefits as great as these and I feel very fortunate to be receiving them. Employees also receive generous vacation and sick time throughout the year. In only 3 years I have acquired a great deal of knowledge from this career, a lot of which I have been able to apply to my daily life. I have become competent with any number of tools and machinery. I feel a heightened sense of awareness and responsibility especially with regards to hazardous situations where my life or another employee's life is on the line.

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?

Working in this field there is no typical day, in my mind that is a large part of the allure. I wake up every work day with a rough idea of what the day might entail but plans change in an instant when problems such as an unexpected leak arise. You may also need to assist other crews who have become overwhelmed with their work load and need to meet a deadline. Team work is probably the best part about the crew at NCCWD. It makes for a stress free work environment enabling you to make the customer's needs the number one priority. Every day is full of activity and there is always a task to be completed in order to maintain an efficient water system. A work day at NCCWD can consist of something as basic as reorganizing and cleaning our shop and vehicles, or something as intense as a 16" water main break that has the potential of leaving 20,000 plus people without water. If a situation of this magnitude occurs you can expect to work long overtime hours that are physically demanding in cold, dark, wet, and muddy conditions. Having great communication and maintaining focus in these intense situations are vital to completing the job efficiently, while at the same time maintaining an endless focus on safety. Every field employee has acquired their Class A license and are often called upon to transport heavy machinery to leak sights and job locations. Every field employees have received proper training in the safe operation heavy machinery such as front loaders, bulldozers, and excavators.

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?

In order to be successful in the water distribution industry you need to have the drive to better yourself. You will start from the rock bottom, being in constant pursuit of advancement. Set goals for yourself and visualize what your next step will be toward achieving that goal. Listen to the advice of employees that have come before you, and ask questions often so you can increase your knowledge in the field. You want to maintain constant awareness of your surroundings and make safety a top priority - always. Come to work every day with a positive attitude and be a team player. In time you will become a more competent employee thus becoming a reliable and highly valued asset to those around you.

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

My advice to prospective employees would be to consider a job in the water industry. Inquire about study material and other information with regards to the water industry. You will be expected to earn certifications by passing exams. I would recommend taking certification exams even before you are hired. This would convey to potential employers that you are indeed serious about entering this field. You might also consider getting in touch with your local water department and request the possibility of shadowing a crew for a few days to get a feel firsthand for what a workday entails. This may not be the flashiest job and you might not have a nice office but there is never a dull moment in this line of work! Career opportunities in this industry may alter slightly with time, but this industry will never become obsolete, as water is a commodity that no human can live without. Good luck to you and I hope this helps to guide you in the right direction!