

What Is a Pipeline?

Pipelines are plastic or steel tubes (pipelines for natural gas are made of carbon steel) buried at a depth of nearly one or two meters. The oil flows through the pipes at speed of 1 to 6 m/sec. There are also multi-product pipelines, used for transportation of different products in the same pipeline. “Scrapers” are used for pipeline inspection and cleaning. Problems like metal loss, dents, mechanical damages, and other anomalies are detected by devices called “smart pigs”. Smart pigs move through the pipeline and remove accumulated materials inside the lines. These devices also inspect and record the condition of the lines.

Pipelines are very economical way to transport refined oil products, oil, and natural gas. Transportation costs are lower, compared to railroad transportation. Pipelines can be constructed under the sea, but this is very expensive.

Pipeline Jobs

In the United States, new pipelines are constructed every day, bringing new job opportunities. There are more than 200,000 miles of pipelines in the United States. Building a pipeline is a very demanding and expensive process. People who participate in the process are well paid. People who work in pipelines also have good salaries, but this may vary, depending on the job location. In general, people who work in remote areas (like The Gulf of Mexico, Alaska, and other places where the oil is extracted) have higher salaries.

Different Types of Pipeline Jobs

Pipeliners repair and maintain the pipelines and pumping stations. Their job is to remove rust, debris and soil from valves and gauges, using sandblasting equipment. They also take care of the pipeline exterior. Sometimes, these workers operate bulldozers and other similar equipment. Part of their job is to ensure there are no any leaks in pipefitting. Pipeliners usually get from 12 to 15 dollars per hour.

Pipeline walkers walk the pipeline in order to detect leakage and other problems. They can use vehicles, or they can walk the area on foot, depending on the pipeline layout and terrain. These workers must know how to fix pipeline problems, like clogged valves, for example. Pipeline walkers are expected to work independently, to be good at problem solving and to be very detailed. They earn from 18 to 21 dollars per hour.

Pipelayers organize pipeline sections, align the pipes, insert steel spacers, etc. They use tractors and other heavy equipment. Average salaries range from 45,000 to 70,000 dollars per year.

Pipeline Design Engineers make project models related to the construction and design of oil pipelines. Their job is also to supervise operation teams and monitor equipment condition. They use programs like AutoCad to create virtual models, which is very helpful in predicting (and preventing) problems. Design engineers work together with project managers. Average salaries range from 85,000 to 145,000 dollars per year. People with more experience have better chances of getting higher salaries.

Quality Assurance Chemists usually work in laboratories, and their job is to validate and study internal and external laboratory data, review and approve corrective measures, etc. The goal is to ensure that regulatory requirements and industry standards are met. These professionals must have experience with LIMS (laboratory information management systems). Average salaries range from 60,000 to 90,000 dollars per year.

Working Conditions: Advantages and Disadvantages of Pipeline Jobs

This depends on where you will work. Your job may be located in Alaska – or it can be located in your town. You should expect living conditions to be different - but still decent. If your job is located in a remote or isolated area, the company will make sure you have everything you need.

If you are getting ready for working in a remote area, the company will inform you of the most important things, like what you need to bring with you, what you don't need to bring, how often you will see your family, and what communication means will be available. Working in remote areas can be stressful, especially for family people, but salaries are usually good. Even if you are working in Alaska, you should still be able to see the bright side: you will earn more money, and you will certainly get more experience in this field.

