

POWER PLANT OPERATOR

Job Description: A power plant operator is in charge of running the equipment needed to generate electricity, including boilers, turbines, gauges and controls, pumps, fans, and more. This person is also responsible for cleaning, lubricating and maintaining equipment to prevent failures or excessive wear and tear. The operator oversees readings and makes observations to detect any equipment problems and takes action to correct those problems. He or she adjusts controls to respond to requested levels of electrical power, and starts and stops generation equipment as needed. This person often works with other individuals and organizations from multiple sites to coordinate regional electrical generation.



Needed skills and education: A power plant operator is someone who is a “doer” and likes physical activities and projects. The operator needs to be a problem solver and respond quickly to equipment failures and operational issues. He or she needs to work well with others and provide oversight and guidance on a wide range of issues to a variety of individuals. Education levels can vary from having a high school degree, to college degrees and even post-graduate master’s degrees. While all power plant operators have substantial on-the-job training, many companies now require at least some post-high school education, including 2-year associate degrees and certifications. Operators often go through an apprentice training period of up to three years before becoming a certified power plant operator.

Wages: In North Dakota, there are approximately 380 power plant operators. They earn an average yearly wage of \$71,470 and the hourly pay ranges from a beginning level of \$29.74 to an experienced level of \$42.92. North Dakota’s wages for power plant operators are slightly higher than the national average.

Other information: Service in the military after high school might be an attractive way to obtain training as a power plant operator. The military services use nearly 13,000 power plant operators and are in constant need of new operators to replace those who leave. The skills learned through supervised on-the-job training and experience, all while receiving military pay, can then be transferred to non-military positions after the military enrollment period ends. In North Dakota, the demand for power plant operators is expected to remain fairly stable, while nationally the outlook is for a slightly decreasing number of new job openings.

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