



King County | Wastewater Treatment

Operator in Training (OIT) Program Creating a Sustainable Workforce

May 2025

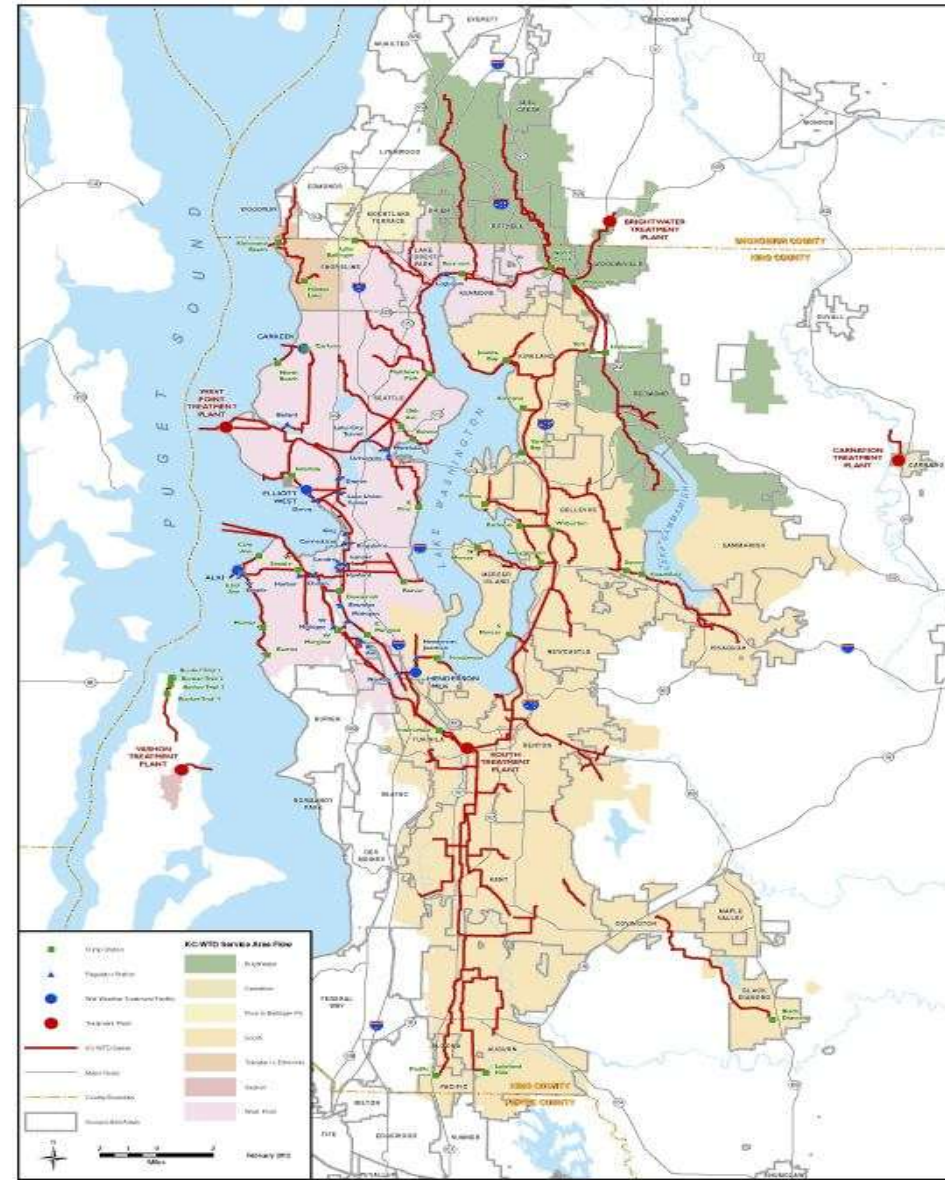
A growing workforce to meet growing demand

Serving approximately 1.9 million
residents

Service area of 424 square miles

Treating an average 279 million gallons a
day

King County has sewage disposal
contracts with
18 cities and 15 sewer districts



A need for succession planning

Institutional knowledge and skills
were being lost as regional system
demand was growing

Out of that realization, the OIT
program was established



Wastewater Treatment Operator Job Duties

Operate, monitor, troubleshoot and maintain systems, processes and equipment in wastewater and stormwater facilities.

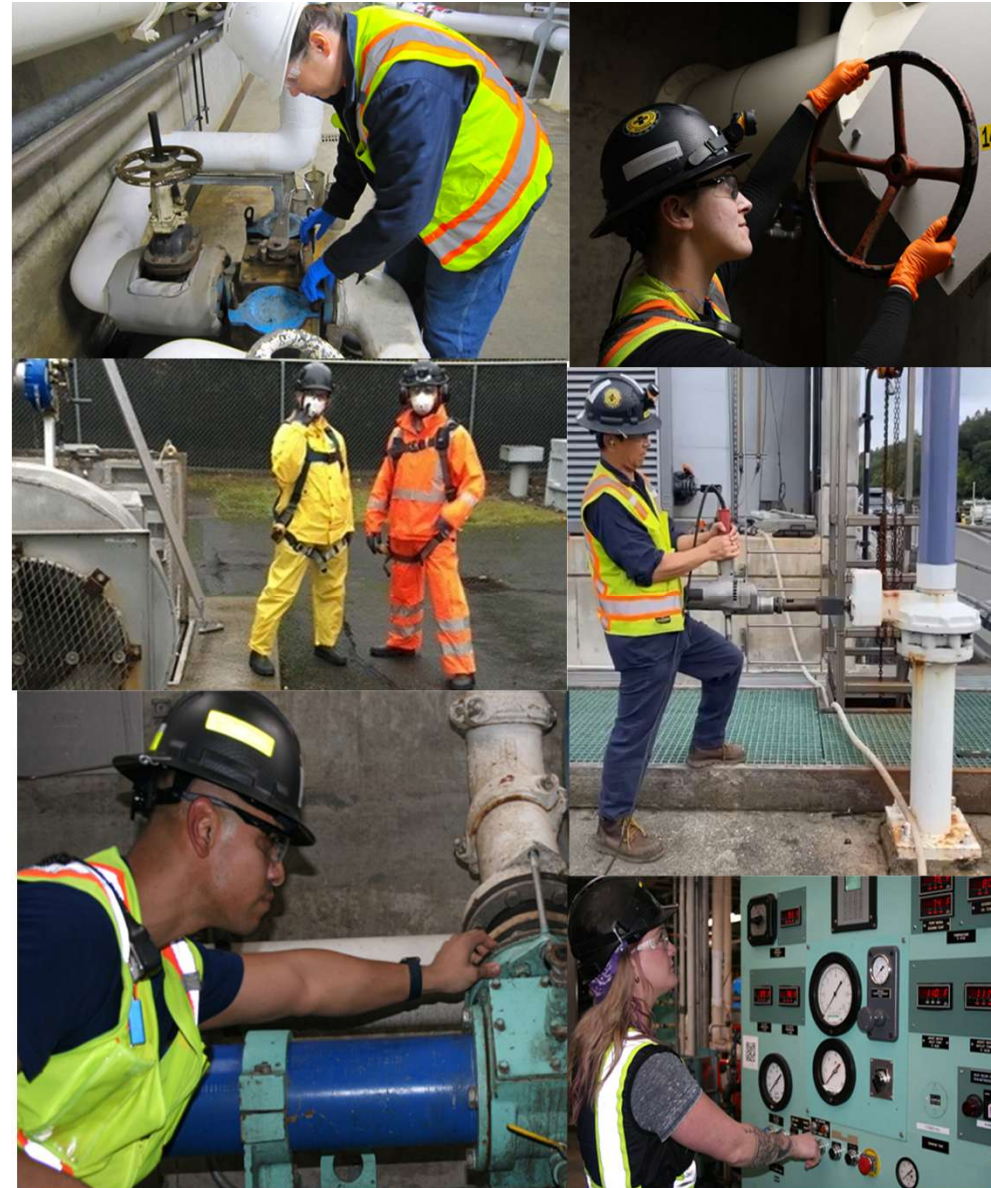
Conduct sampling and analysis of wastewater.

Respond to unusual occurrences, assist in emergency responses.

Communicate with the public, construction personnel, consultants and engineers.

Develop operational and safety procedures and documentation.

Train others through on-the-job training.





Program Goals

“If we can’t hire enough
ready-to-operate operators,
we’ll create our own”

Provide OITs with basic wastewater knowledge and troubleshooting skills to contribute to a crew in a job shadow or on-the-job training environment

Increase diversity in our operations staff - a goal stated in the MOA



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OIT Selection Process

Screened on their potential to progress to a Wastewater Treatment Operator, including:

- Basic math and chemistry skills
- Mechanical aptitude
- Demonstrated interest in a career in wastewater operations
- Interpersonal skills and work ethic

Wastewater knowledge & experience NOT Required!



OIT Selection Process

Achieve a passing score on the basic knowledge and mechanical aptitude tests.

Ability to lift and move 50 pounds

Ability to work in confined space areas

Ability to work at heights of up to 30 feet

Ability to work at any shift at any Wastewater Treatment Division Location

South Treatment Plant (Renton)

West Point Treatment Plant (Seattle)

Brightwater Treatment Plant (Woodinville)

Pre-employment physical required upon job offer.

Valid Drivers License



Program Curriculum & Training

First 6 Months:

12 Weeks of Classroom Training

Wastewater fundamentals course work

Tours of King County Wastewater Treatment Facilities

Multiple field trips exploring a variety of facilities involved in wastewater treatment

Plant operations and safety training

On the Job Training with certified wastewater treatment operators.

Must pass the Washington State Department of Ecology OIT Certification Exam.



Program Curriculum & Training

After obtaining the OIT Certification

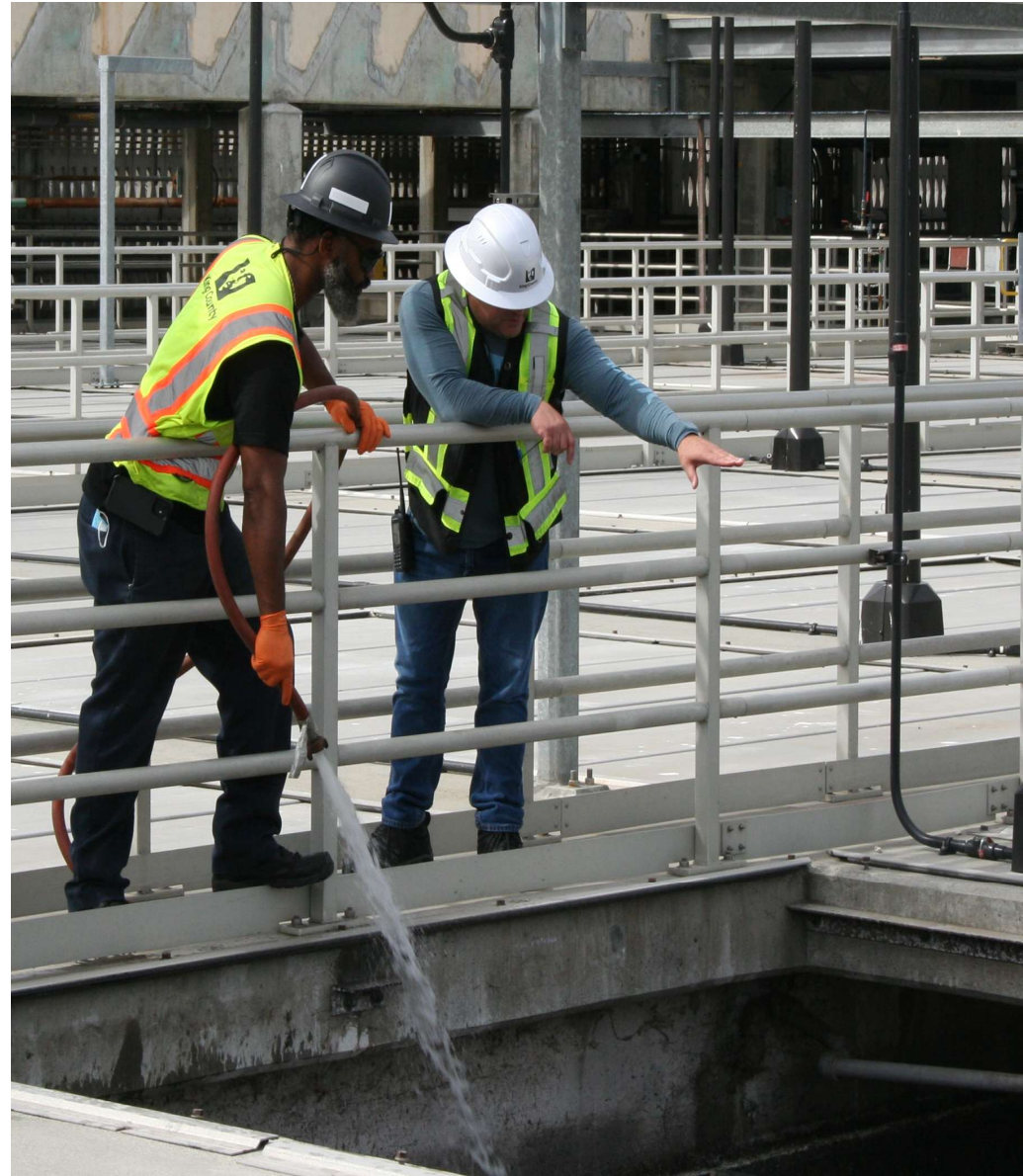
Continue on the Job Training with certified wastewater treatment operators.

Rotate between plant locations, work groups and schedules to gain operations experience.

After 1 Year of Wastewater Treatment Plant Operation Experience:

Candidates are eligible for their Washington State Wastewater Treatment Operator Group I Certification and begin to compete for Operator positions as they become available.

Candidates may continue as an OIT for up to 3 years if in good standing while competing for operator positions (most are hired on before the 2-year mark).



Outcomes

A well-trained, well-rounded certified Washington State Wastewater Operator within 1 year.

Potential to obtain a King County Wastewater Career Service Wastewater Operator Position.

Fill a satisfying role that makes a difference every day.

A job providing a family living wage, excellent benefits, including a State sponsored pension for life.

Job security

All in a workplace where supporting diversity and inclusion is the rule



Operator in Training Program Pay:

2025 Utility Worker/Operator in Training Program starting wage rate:
\$28.86

2025 Operator in Training (OIT) Program – 6th month, program progression wage rate:
\$34.90

2025 Operator starting wage rate:
\$41.20

WTD Operators

A Major Success Story

Certified staff of about 160 Operators

104 Operators graduated from OIT program

The most recent OIT cohort begins in June of 2025

We have a 75% success rate



Thank You

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King County
Department of Natural Resources and Parks

TEASER

Wastewater's next generation

Questions



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