

# PIPEFITTERS ... ON THE JOB:

## JOHN CLIFF

### Q: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING IN FORT MCMURRAY?

I came out here in March 1977. Initially my idea was to just come out here for five years, pay off my truck and some other bills and leave. That was the plan but it didn't quite work out that way. I ended up settling roots here. I've raised three kids in Fort McMurray, one of which works here, another one works in Edmonton..

### Q: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WORKED AS A PIPE FITTER?

No, I started out as a welder but had a pipefitters ticket too because I wanted a dual trade. I prefer pipefitting to welding because you just have to prepare the pipe, fit it and then the welder comes in, tacks it up and you walk away. You don't have to deal with all the smoke and heat of welding which is nice.

### Q: DO YOU WORK IN TOWN OR OUT OF TOWN?

I currently work in town but I worked out of town in various plants for about 30 years. Right now I work for Clearwater, which I've worked for on and off, but this time for about three years. I prefer working in town because I'm closer to home. The commute home from the plants can be brutal, they can be an hour each way. I live a 10-minute drive from my house so it's nice. Once I'm done my day, I can just go right home and relax.

### Q: WHAT KIND OF HOURS DO YOU WORK?

Right now I work five days a week for eight hours a day. But your hours really depend on who you work for and what kind of work you do. Pipefitters can work all kinds of shifts, like six days on, six days off, fourteen on, seven off etc. If you're working shutting down plants you're going to work 12 hour days straight until the plant is completely shut down, so those are long, hard shifts, but the pay is better.

### Q: WHAT KIND OF MONEY DO YOU MAKE?

I make just over \$45 per hour. It used to be if you worked out of town on plants you earned more but in the past few years they have made it more equal because otherwise they couldn't get anyone to work in town.

### Q: WHAT KIND OF SKILLS DO YOU NEED TO BE A PIPEFITTER?

You need to be good at math. I never really considered myself good at math but I've had apprentices in here and had to teach them things that are second nature to me. It's mostly geometry like determining lengths, diameters and other measurements. You also have to be good with your hands and not afraid to work hard. This is a very manual job that requires you to lift very heavy pipes so you need to be in good physical condition.



# OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE

## STEAMFITTERS-PIPEFITTERS

(NOC 7252)

Steamfitter-pipefitters lay out, assemble, fabricate, maintain and repair piping systems which carry water, steam, chemicals or fuel used in heating, cooling, lubricating and other processes. This can include measuring, cutting, threading, bending and installing metal, plastic and fibreglass pipes, valves and fittings.

## HOURLY WAGES

For full-time and part-time workers\*  
Steamfitters-pipefitters (NOC 7252)

	Low	High	Average	Median
Starting	\$18.00	\$45.00	\$29.26	\$24.75
Overall	\$25.80	\$51.33	\$34.42	\$31.43
Top	\$28.00	\$60.00	\$41.29	\$40.00

\*Source: 2014 Alberta Wage and Salary Survey, for all of Alberta

## AVERAGE SALARY

\$78,731

## EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

To work in Alberta, pipefitters must be ONE of the following:

- a registered apprentice
- an Alberta-certified journey person
- someone who holds a recognized related trade certificate

The term of apprenticeship is three years (three 12 month periods) that include a minimum of 1,500 hours of on-the-job training and eight weeks of technical training each year.

# LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

## JOB TIPS

- Steamfitters-pipefitters have the option of working in a union or not. In Alberta the two Steamfitters-pipefitters unions are Local 488 ([www.local488.ca](http://www.local488.ca)) or the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) ([www.clac.ca](http://www.clac.ca)). While wages for union vs. non-union pipefitters is mainly the same, union workers can enjoy a bit more job security, benefits and training programs.
- Job sites such as [www.indeed.ca](http://www.indeed.ca), <http://www.kijiji.ca/h-fort-mcmurray/1700232> and <http://www.jobbank.gc.ca> are all great places to find Steamfitter-pipefitter jobs in Fort McMurray.
- Being a Steamfitter-pipefitter is a physically demanding job. You may work indoors or outdoors and may be required to lift items over 20 kg. Hours can also vary, with some employers offering longer shifts than others.

## SKILLS SHORTAGE

- There are often job openings for Steamfitters-pipefitters in the Wood Buffalo region, as 68% of employers said they recruited for this position in the last two years and 57% also said they experienced hiring difficulties.
- The vacancy rate for this position was 2% in 2013.

Source: Government of Alberta ALIS OCCinfo

## INTERESTING FACTS AND TRENDS

- Experienced steamfitter – pipefitters may advance to supervisory positions such as foreman, sub-contractor, contractor and construction superintendent.
- Steamfitters-pipefitters is the top construction, turnaround and ongoing maintenance occupation between 2014 and 2019. It is expected there will be 4,785 more pipefitter jobs at its peak in 2019.

Source: Edmonton Journal, Careers in Oil and Gas

# ESSENTIAL SKILLS

## Reading



- Read instructions and warnings written on labels, signs, packaging and technical drawings.
- Read reminders and short notes from co-workers.

## Document use



- Observe hazard and safety icons.
- Enter and locate data, such as dates and identification numbers in labels and tags.

## Writing



- Write reminders and short notes to customers and co-workers.
- Write short comments in email, forms and log books.

## Numeracy



- May receive cash, debit and credit card payments and make change.
- Take a variety of measurements using basic tools.

## Oral communication



- Speak with suppliers to learn about products, prices and delivery schedules.
- Discuss specifications, safety concerns, procedures, and more with co-workers and other tradespeople.

## Thinking



- Encounter delays due to equipment breakdowns and shortages of materials.
- Miss deadlines when tasks extend beyond time estimates for completion.

## Digital Technology



- Use calculators and personal digital assistant (PDA) devices to complete numeracy-related tasks.
- May use word processing software to write letters to customers and prepare job estimates and invoices.

## OTHER INFORMATION

- To install a typical piping system in a commercial building or industrial plant, Steamfitter-pipefitters study blueprints, drawings and specifications to determine the type of pipe and tools to use and lay out the sequence of tasks. They also make detailed sketches for pipe and equipment fabrication and installation (if required), join pipe sections and related equipment and secure in position and use testing equipment to check systems for leaks.
- Steamfitter-pipefitters need the physical strength and stamina required to lift heavy materials and stand for long periods, they must have manual dexterity, they should have mechanical aptitude, the ability to read and understand complex instructions, the ability to do careful and exacting work and they should enjoy working with little direction or supervision.
- For more information on Steamfitter-pipefitters please visit the External Profile: [http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es\\_view\\_profile-eng.do?prof\\_id=44&lang=eng](http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_view_profile-eng.do?prof_id=44&lang=eng)