



Facts about State Certification for Plumbers

Anyone who works in the plumbing construction trade must be certified with the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) as a journeyman, residential-specialty, pump-and-irrigation specialty, limited-volume domestic-pump specialty, or backflow-specialty plumber.

Individuals learning the plumbing trade must carry trainee certificates.

L&I administers the plumber certification law, Chapter 18.106 RCW (Revised Code of Washington).

Plumber Classifications

What are the classifications of plumbers in Washington State?

- **Journeyman plumbers** are qualified to work in all phases of the plumbing construction trade.
- **Medical Gas** endorsements are issued only to active journeymen who have completed a 32-hour medical-gas training course approved by L&I.
- **Residential specialty** plumbers are limited to installation, maintenance, and repair of plumbing in single-family dwellings, duplexes and apartment buildings that do not exceed three stories.
- **Pump and Irrigation specialty** plumbers perform installation, maintenance, and repair of equipment that is used to acquire, treat, store, or move water suitable for drinking or other domestic purposes, including irrigation or to a domestic water pumping system.
- **Limited volume domestic pump** specialty plumbers perform installation, maintenance, and repair of equipment that is used to acquire, treat, store, or move water suitable for drinking or other domestic purposes on pumping systems not exceeding one hundred gallons per minute.
- **Backflow specialty** plumbers are limited to maintenance and repair of existing backflow prevention assemblies within a building. This does not include installing or replacing backflow prevention assemblies.

Plumber Certification

How do I become certified to work as a plumber?

You must meet certain qualifications and pass an examination, or become certified through mutual exchange (reciprocity) agreements with other states. For more information about reciprocity, call L&I's Plumber Certification Section at 360-902-5207.

To qualify for examination, you must document your work experience according to the requirements of the trade. All work experience must be performed under the supervision of an appropriately certified plumber. To become certified, you must score at least 70% on each section of the exam.

Exam Requirements	
Trade	Requirements
Journeyman	8,000 hours work experience, which includes 4,000 hours commercial or industrial work
Residential Specialty	6,000 hours work experience
Pump and Irrigation Specialty	Two years of practical experience working on pumping systems exceeding 100 gallons per minute, or the equivalent
Limited Volume Domestic Pump Specialty	One year of practical experience working on pumping systems not exceeding 100 gallons per minute
Backflow Specialty	Must provide a copy of an active Backflow Assembly Tester Certification from the Washington State Department of Health

What is on the journeyman/residential specialty exam?

This is a closed book, three-part exam based on Washington State's current plumbing code. It also includes water, and waste and vent sizing from schematic drawings. The exam provides the Drainage Fixture Units Value Table 7-3, Water Supply Fixture Units Table 6-5, Fixture Units Table 6-6, and Flushometer Fixture Units Table 6-7. No other tables will be provided.

What is on the pump and irrigation/limited-volume domestic specialty exam?

This exam is based on the National Ground Water Association (NGWA) "Voluntary Certification Exam Study Guide." Certified Pump Installers must complete the Water Systems – General Exam and must opt for either the "K" or "L" exam modules:

- NGWA "K" Exam—Water Systems <100 GPM for the limited domestic PL 03a certification
- NGWA "L" Exam—Water Systems >100 GPM for the pump and irrigation PL 03 certification

What is on the backflow specialty exam?

This exam is made up of questions relating to safety, regulation, operation and troubleshooting of backflow prevention assemblies.

Plumber Trainees

Who may supervise plumber trainees on the job site?

The following conditions and ratios apply to plumber trainers:

- One plumber trainee for every certified journeyman plumber installing medical gas. Supervision is required 100% of the time while installing medical gas.
- One plumber trainee for every certified journeyman plumber working on a commercial job site. Supervision is required a minimum of 75% of the time at each separate job site.
- Two plumber trainees for every certified residential specialty or journeyman plumber working on a residential job site. Supervision is required for a minimum of 75% of the time at each separate job site.

- Two plumbing trainees for every certified domestic pump specialty plumber or journeyman plumber working on a domestic pump system. Supervision is required for a minimum of 75% of the time at each separate job site.
- Limited-volume domestic pump trainees completing 720 hours of supervised work may take the limited-volume domestic pump exam, and if passed, trainees may then work unsupervised until the remaining 2,000 hours have been met to get the limited-volume domestic pump certification.
- One backflow trainee for every certified backflow specialty plumber working on a commercial job site. Supervision is required 100% of the time while performing backflow assembly maintenance and repair.
- Two backflow trainees for every certified backflow specialty plumber working on a residential job site performing backflow assembly maintenance and repair. Supervision is required 100% of the time while performing maintenance and repair of backflow prevention assemblies.

How should plumber-trainees document their hours?

All work experience must be performed under the direct supervision of an appropriately certified plumber. Work experience must be documented in affidavit form and signed by the registered contractor, and the supervising plumber's name and certification number must be listed on the form.

Does a residential/specialty plumber need a plumber-trainee card?

Yes, if working on commercial job sites, residential/specialty plumbers must maintain an active trainee card and work under the supervision of a certified journeyman plumber.

NOTE:

Plumber trainee hours obtained in this state will be credited only if an active Washington State trainee card was in place when the work occurred. See Chapter 18.106.070(2) RCW.

Contractor Responsibilities

What are a contractor's responsibilities when performing plumbing work?

- Ensure that each person who is performing plumbing on the job site has an active plumber or trainee certification.
- Guarantee that trainees are under the direct supervision of a certified plumber and within the legal ratio.
- If medical gas is being installed, ensure installer has an active medical-gas piping endorsement.
- If backflow assembly maintenance and repair is being performed, ensure the person performing the work has an active BAT card and is a certified plumber.
- Maintain records to verify and attest to trainee hours.

Under what circumstances may L&I audit a contractor's records?

L&I may audit a contractor's records for excessive hours or for hours reported:

- For individuals who do not have active trainee cards.
- Outside of the normal course of the contractor's business.
- For improper supervision and ratio.

Penalties

What are the penalties for violating plumber certification/contractor registration requirements?

Monetary penalties range from \$250 for the first infraction and to up to \$1,000 for each subsequent infraction. Each day an individual works in violation is considered a separate infraction. In addition, each job site an individual works at in violation is considered a separate infraction.

Advisory Board of Plumbers

What is the Advisory Board of Plumbers?

The Advisory Board of Plumbers was established to give citizens a voice in their government and provide a means of influencing decisions. It is comprised of two journeyman plumbers, one specialty plumber, three members who conduct a plumbing business (with at least one being engaged in specialty plumbing), and a member from the general public who is familiar with the business and trade of plumbing. The board meets on the third Tuesday of January, April, July and October. Meetings are open to the public.



Applications and Renewals

Where can I obtain applications for plumbers and trainees?

L&I's local offices provide applications for plumbers and trainees. Check the blue government pages of your telephone book for the office nearest you or see the L&I Web site at www.Offices.Lni.wa.gov.

Applications also are available on the L&I Web site at www.Plumbers.Lni.wa.gov.

What is required for renewing plumber and trainee certificates?

The renewal requirements for each trade are shown below. The fees vary, so please contact your local L&I office for the fee schedule or visit www.Plumbers.Lni.wa.gov, click on Training and Continuing Education and then Fees.

Plumber Renewing Requirements		
Type of Certificate	Renewal Period	L&I-Approved Continuing Education
Journeyman or Residential Specialty	Every other year.*	16 hours. Must include a minimum of 4 hours related to electrical safety, 8 hours of plumbing code, plus 4 additional hours.
Pump and irrigation/limited volume domestic specialty	Every three years.*	24 hours, on both electrical and plumbing certifications.
Backflow certification	Every other year.*	None required
Medical gas	Annually.*	Maintain an active journeyman certification and submit affidavit attesting that (1) brazing was performed at least once every six months in the previous year, and (2) a review of current medical-gas code was completed.
*Renewal must be completed on or before your birth date, and if not, the fee will double. If not completed within 90 days, you will have to pay an examination fee and retake the test.		
Trainee	Annually. Trainees must provide an accurate list of employers in the past year and the number of hours worked for each.	Must complete a minimum of 8 hours each year and meet the same requirements of the trade, as shown above for Journeyman or Residential.

 **On the Web:** Visit the L&I Web site at: www.Lni.wa.gov

Other formats for persons with disabilities are available on request. Call 1-800-547-8367. TDD users, call 360-902-5797. L&I is an equal opportunity employer.