

EMPLOYMENT IN THE INLAND WATERWAYS INDUSTRY



WHAT ARE THE INLAND WATERWAYS?

Inland waterways are the 25,000 miles of rivers, lakes, bays, and manmade channels that wind their way through 38 states. Within these waterways, powerful vessels called towboats push barges that transport essential energy, agricultural, and other critical commodities for delivery across the nation and around the world.

The people that work on these vessels are essential to the nation's supply chain and make a difference every day by transporting more than \$73 billion of products every year.



WHAT KIND OF JOBS ARE THERE IN THE INLAND WATERWAYS INDUSTRY?

Inland waterways workers typically work on towboats that move either dry or liquid cargo. There are a variety of jobs that are required to keep a towboat operating efficiently and safely, including working with the cargo, ensuring the boat is maintained and clean, and of course, navigating and piloting the vessel.



Dedicated and hard-working employees can experience rapid advancement based on merit and training, which many companies pay for. Industry experts often point out that jobs in the inland waterways will not be replaced with artificial intelligence, since experienced crewmembers are needed to handle the wide range of factors and variables that occur while working on boats.

The entry-level position on a boat is a deckhand. Deckhands help dock the vessel, connect the vessel to barges of cargo, maintain and repair machinery, and stand watch to keep the boat and your crewmates safe.

Once you master being a deckhand, you may move up to become a mate. Mates oversee the deckhands and all activities and equipment on the boat. Deckhands can also move up to become a tankerman responsible for transferring cargoes like diesel and gasoline, chemicals, and liquified petroleum gas.

A mate or tankerman can move on to become either an engineer, responsible for maintaining mechanical systems on the boat; or they can become a steersman, which is an apprentice to become the pilot of the boat. The pilot, who is second in command, steers the boat and supervises the crew in alternating shifts with the captain.

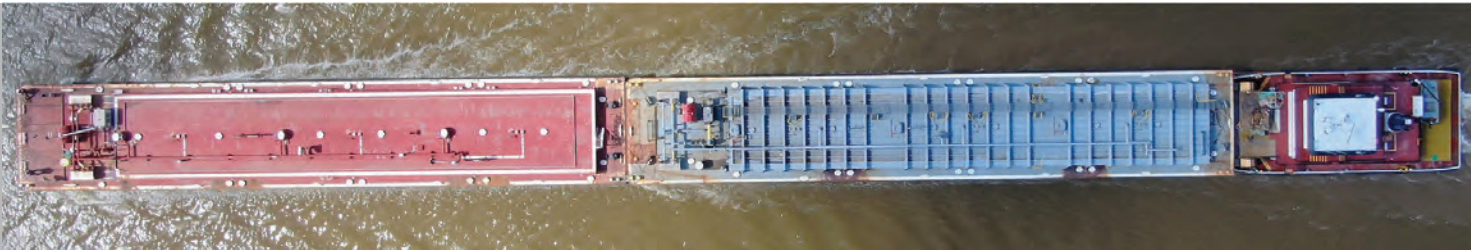
Finally, the highest position on a towboat is the captain, who is responsible for managing the crew and piloting the boat. Along the way, there are opportunities to transition to shore-based employment. Opportunities ashore include jobs as a shore tankerman, port engineer, port captain, fleet dispatcher, and other roles supporting a large fleet of vessels.





WHAT IS THE SCHEDULE LIKE?

Some vessels operate in local harbor areas where crews often work 12-hour shifts and live close by. But on many vessels, the crew live aboard and work for 14 to 30 days and then have 7 to 30 days off. In those positions, many crewmembers live just about anywhere in the country since travel to and from the boat often happens just once per month and these costs are often paid for by the company. Unlike many other freight rail and trucking jobs, schedules are very reliable and most importantly, pay is not affected when work is impacted by circumstances outside of the control of workers—like how many miles a trucker drives each day. A job in the inland waterways provides a career with the freedom to live anywhere and offers ample personal time—an exceptional work/life balance you won't find in any other job!

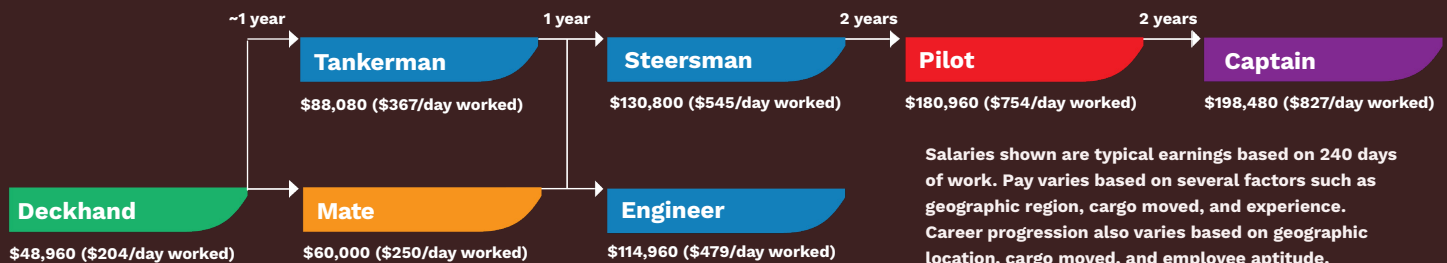


WHAT IS THE PAY LIKE?

Compensation on inland waterways boats is often described as a day rate for each day worked. Annual wages vary based on the number of days worked, with some workers choosing schedules that allow them to work 180 days on and 180 days off in a year, while others choose schedules that have them working 240 days a year with 120 days off. Wages vary based on the area of the river operated and the individual company, as well as on seniority within each position. To give you an idea of what you could earn in a year, these are the earnings of each role based on a daily rate that is about the midpoint of wages offered across the country:

- Deckhand midpoint annual earnings—\$37,000-\$48,960 (\$204/day worked).
- Mate midpoint annual earnings—\$45,000-\$60,000 (\$250/day worked).
- Tankerman midpoint annual earnings—\$66,000-\$88,080 (\$367/day worked).
- Engineer midpoint annual earnings—\$86,000-\$114,960 (\$479/day worked).
- Steersman midpoint annual earnings—\$100,000-\$130,800 (\$545/day worked).
- Pilot midpoint annual earnings—\$136,000-\$180,960 (\$754/day worked).
- Captain midpoint annual earnings—\$150,000-\$198,480 (\$827/day worked).

Typical Career Ladder for Inland Waterways Employees



HOW DO I START MY CAREER?

Starting a career in the inland waterways does not require a college degree. You'll just need to obtain a Transportation Worker Identification Credential. Once employed, you'll have the opportunity to acquire additional credentials and certifications that provide opportunities for career advancement. Use online job boards and postings to find companies and positions you're interested in applying for and start your future today!

