

KRWA's first registered apprentice,  
Clint Bivens, City of Sabetha



**WATER AND WASTEWATER OPERATORS ARE ESSENTIAL TO EVERY COMMUNITY, CREATING A STABLE JOB OPPORTUNITY FOR LONG-TERM CAREERS.**



***Learn and Earn!***  
**Kansas Rural Water Association**  
**APPRENTICESHIP**  
**PROGRAM**

*The KRWA Registered Apprenticeship Program is recognized by the Kansas Department of Labor and with other state associations through National Rural Water Association, under the U.S. Department of Labor. The Apprenticeship Program is designed to help train the next generation of skilled workers and provide standardized training across the nation in Drinking Water and Wastewater professionals' occupations. Apprentices will earn-while-they-learn in a structured two-year training program that combines on-the-job training with related technical instruction. Apprentices work with knowledgeable and passionate people who ensure that Americans can continue relying on safe drinking water and vital wastewater services that protect public health and the environment.*

*Water and wastewater workers provide an invaluable service – day in and day out. Their work is essential to protecting public health and the environment. See the next page for more information about the KRWA Apprenticeship Program. To apply, contact KRWA Apprenticeship Coordinator Monica Wurtz.*

## Program Overview

Over the next decade, the water sector is expected to lose between 30 and 50 percent of the workforce to retirement. To combat disproportionate retirement, KRWA has partnered with the National Rural Water Association to develop an Apprenticeship Program that will offer two new career paths – Water System Operation Specialist and Wastewater System Operation Specialist.

### **Minimum Requirements for Apprentices:**

1. At least 18 years of age
2. High school diploma, GED or equivalent
3. Physically capable of performing essential functions
4. Take and pass drug screen
5. Pass a background check
6. Valid state issued driver's license



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WATER  
association

quality water, quality life

**The mission of the Kansas Rural Water Association is:**

**Provide education and leadership necessary to enhance the effectiveness of Kansas' water and wastewater utilities.**

## Benefit for Apprentices

Water and Wastewater System Operators help provide safe drinking water to millions of Kansans and protect our natural waterways. Operators are a vital part of our communities. Without properly trained personnel in these roles communities can suffer. During their training, apprentices will work alongside professional operators, learn skills that can be taken anywhere, and earn a wage while they learn.

### **Participating Apprentices will be required to:**

- Meet the Minimum Requirements for apprentices
- Register as an Apprentice with KRWA
- Be employed or be willing to become employed by a Participating Member System
- Complete the 2-year program:
  - 4,000 on-the-job training hours
  - 288 related instruction hours (classroom hours)

## Benefit for Systems

Many Water and Wastewater Operators in Kansas have worked at the same utility for most of their career. With retirement, they will depart with decades of valuable institutional knowledge. These training programs will offer member systems a way to pass down and retain critical skills and knowledge of their water and wastewater systems to the next generation of industry workers.

### **Participating Systems will be expected to:**

- Identify and support an experienced mentor to provide guidance and on-site training to apprentices
- Pay the apprentice's wages
- Take advantage of Program Coordinator to resolve concerns and ensure best outcome for apprentice
- Strongly consider retaining apprentices following program completion

If you are interested in registering as an Apprentice or becoming a Participating Member System contact KRWA Apprenticeship Program Coordinator:

**Monica Wurtz**, KRWA Technical Assistant  
email: [monica@krwa.net](mailto:monica@krwa.net)  
cell: 785-262-7301

# Spotlight on Apprenticeship

**Name of Apprentice:** Clint Bivens

**System:** City of Sabetha, Wastewater Treatment Plant

**Apprenticeship Track:** Water Operations Specialist

**Apprenticeship Start Date:** October 13, 2020

**Hobbies:** Fishing, Hunting, and time with family



Wastewater operator for the city of Sabetha, and KRWA's first apprentice, Clint Bivens, inspects a sample pulled from the effluent of the city's activated sludge wastewater treatment plant.

**KRWA: How long have you worked for the city of Sabetha? Any previous experience?**

**Bivens:** I have worked for the city of Sabetha for seven years. I started out working in the street department for four years and then moved to a position at the wastewater treatment plant. Prior to working for the city of Sabetha, I was an arborist in the state of Maine for six years.

**KRWA: What are your main responsibilities at the treatment plant?**

**Bivens:** My main responsibility is to maintain a safe, functioning plant. I need to make sure that the water quality leaving the plant and released into the environment is safe and toxin free. There are many tasks that I perform on a daily basis to ensure this happens. I collect samples from local industries and run tests to measure the level of solids, pH, and biological oxygen demand (BOD.) I also check the hours on the lift station and test them to see if they are operating correctly. If they are not, I have to fix them by cleaning them or replacing parts. At the plant, I check the pH, solids, and BOD in the influent and effluent. If something is not where it needs to be, I have to make adjustments by changing the return activated sludge (RAS) timing, waste timing, or the amount of air that I'm feeding the plant. I perform preventive maintenance on a daily, weekly, and yearly schedule. I clean tanks when they need cleaned, keep the dissolved oxygen (DO) probes in clean working order, maintain the headworks to make sure that the bar screen is clean, make sure that the spiral screen is working well, and I dump solids from the headworks daily. I also run the sludge press when it needs ran so that I do not have too much

sludge in the plant. I have to maintain good working order of four large air blowers and two ultraviolet (UV) units for disinfection. I test the effluent for BOD, total suspended solids (TSS), pH, and ammonia weekly and report the results to the state. I am the operator, groundskeeper, janitor, and maintenance person. If anything is wrong with the plant or lift stations, I have to fill out incident reports, corrective action reports, bypass reports and report some of those things to the state.

**KRWA: What is your favorite part about being a water plant operator?**

**Bivens:** I like knowing that what I am doing is helping the environment and keeping the people that live in town safe.

**KRWA: What is the most challenging part about being a wastewater plant operator?**

**Bivens:** I would have to say maintaining the correct sludge levels and age.

**KRWA: What made you interested in KRWA's Apprenticeship Program?**

**Bivens:** I wanted to become a certified operator and I knew that this program would help me learn a lot more than I already knew. I wanted to have access to as much information and help as possible before I took the operator certification exam.

**KRWA: What do you hope to achieve by participating in the program?**

**Bivens:** I hope to expand my knowledge base and become certified after this program, so that I can continue to use these skills in the future.

**KRWA: Would you recommend the program to anyone that might be considering it? Why?**

**Bivens:** I highly recommend this program to anyone who is interested in this field. Employed or not, this program has already taught me more than I thought it would. All of the information provided by this program is very good. It will give anyone a better knowledge base and understanding in wastewater.

*Monica Wurtz began work with KRWA in October 2013. She previously worked at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and also worked at US EPA Region 7 for four years. Monica is considered a national expert on various drinking water regulations.*

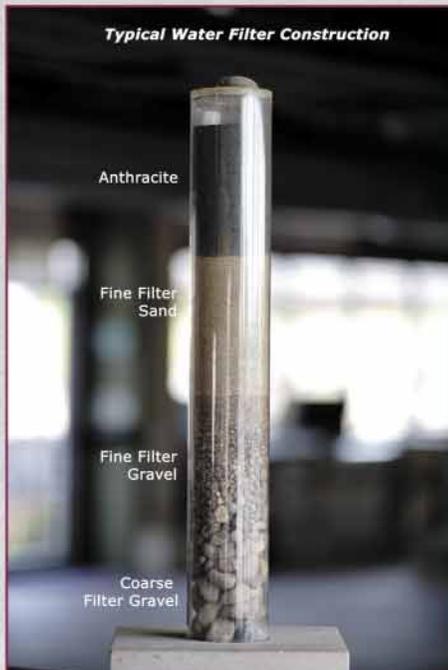




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