

SALARY GUIDE

2026 Commercial Irrigation Salary Guide

National wage benchmarks for the 10 most-recruited commercial irrigation roles, sourced from BLS data via the nearest matching classification — with every unverified figure disclosed, not filled in.

How to read this guide.

Every wage figure below is sourced from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics via O*NET OnLine, using the closest matching BLS occupational classification for a trade with **no dedicated occupation of its own**. These are national figures for a proxy classification, not internal placement data, and not a substitute for a live local wage check.

Several commercial irrigation roles don't map to a wage figure we can independently verify from this classification approach. Where that's the case, we say so directly in this guide — we don't fabricate a number where the data doesn't exist.

The two figures we can verify — and the roles we can't yet.

ROLE	NEAREST CLASSIFICATION	MEDIAN ANNUAL	MEDIAN HOURLY
Irrigation Technician / Installer, Service Tech, CIT holder, Smart/Controller Tech, Water Mgmt Auditor	Grounds Maintenance Workers (37-3011)	\$39,150	\$18.82
Backflow Prevention Specialist	Plumbers, Pipefitters, Steamfitters (47-2152)	\$63,800	\$30.67
Irrigation System Designer	Landscape Architects (17-1012)*	not independently verified — see below	
Irrigation Foreman / Crew Lead	First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping (37-1012)*	not independently verified — see below	
Irrigation Project Manager	Construction Managers (11-9021)*	not independently verified — see below	
Irrigation Estimator	Cost Estimators (13-1051)*	not independently verified — see below	

The two dollar figures above are the wage figures published on our Commercial Irrigation industry page, sourced from BLS wage data via O*NET OnLine. *For the four roles marked with an asterisk, we have identified the correct proxy BLS occupation but have not independently sourced and verified a current wage figure for it — rather than estimate, we're naming the gap.

Growth/outlook percentages are also not available for any role in this guide at this time, for the same reason: we have not independently verified a BLS 2024–34 projections figure specific to these classifications, so none are cited here.

We don't have state-level wage data for this trade yet — and we're not going to invent it.

State-by-state wage breakdowns exist for the two proxy BLS occupations above (Grounds Maintenance Workers and Plumbers/Pipefitters/Steamfitters), but we have not independently verified a state-level irrigation-specific breakdown, and general grounds-maintenance or plumbing wage variation by state is not the same thing as irrigation-specific variation. Rather than borrow a state figure from an adjacent trade and imply it's irrigation-specific, we're naming this as an open gap.

What we can say directionally: markets with longer growing seasons and higher irrigation-system density likely see steadier year-round demand than markets with a short, compressed season — but that's a reasonable inference, not a sourced statistic, and we're labeling it as such.

RELATED TRADES CONTEXT

Backflow work sits inside a higher-paying licensed-trade classification.

Backflow Prevention Specialists' closest BLS classification — Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters (SOC 47-2152) — carries a national median of **\$63,800** a year (about **\$30.67/hour**), roughly 63% above the Grounds Maintenance Workers median that covers most other irrigation roles on this list. That gap reflects the licensed-trade skill and liability backflow and main-line work carries relative to general grounds and irrigation-service work.

We do not have a verified BLS growth/outlook percentage for either classification to cite in this guide — see the note under the wage benchmarks table.

Roles without a distinct BLS classification

Irrigation System Designer — no distinct BLS occupation exists for this role. The nearest tracked classification is Landscape Architects (SOC 17-1012), but the working professional credential is the Irrigation Association's Certified Irrigation Designer (CID), which BLS does not track separately. We have not independently verified a wage figure for this classification, so none is cited here.

Smart / Controller Systems Technician — no dedicated BLS code exists for irrigation-automation specialists specifically. Grounds Maintenance Workers (37-3011) is the nearest tracked occupation, and the \$39,150/\$18.82 figure above applies as a floor, not a ceiling — controller and automation skills likely command a premium over general grounds-maintenance work, but we don't have a sourced figure for that premium.

Landscape Water Management Auditor — same nearest classification (37-3011); the working credential is CLIA, which EPA WaterSense recognizes as the professional auditing standard but which BLS does not track as a distinct occupation or wage figure.

TOTAL COMPENSATION

Base wage is the start of the conversation, especially in a seasonal trade.

Particularly for field roles, total compensation typically includes more than the base hourly or annual figure captured in BLS wage data:

- **Seasonal structure.** Whether pay is structured for year-round work (with off-season winterization/retrofit assignments) or seasonal layoff changes the real annual number substantially — confirm this explicitly with any offer you're benchmarking.
- **Certification reimbursement.** CIT, CIC, CID, and CLIA exam and renewal fees, sometimes employer-covered as a retention lever.
- **Licensure support for backflow work.** ASSE 5110 training and testing costs, which some employers cover to build in-house testing capacity rather than subcontracting it.
- **Vehicle and equipment provisions.** Service and installer roles often involve company-vehicle or fuel-allowance arrangements worth confirming explicitly rather than assuming.

When benchmarking an offer against this guide's figures, weigh the full package — including whether the role is structured as year-round — not just the base annual number.

METRO CONTEXT

National medians are a floor, not a forecast, for any specific market.

Every figure in this guide is a national median for a proxy classification, not a local read. Unlike some of the other trades we cover, we don't yet have commercial-irrigation-specific metro or regional wage data to layer on top of these national figures — rather than borrow a number from an adjacent trade's metro breakdown and imply it's irrigation-specific, we're naming that as an open gap here too.

If you need a market-specific read for a metro you operate in, that's a conversation worth having directly with a recruiting partner who can research it rather than estimate it. See mytradetalent.com/service-areas for the markets we actively recruit in.

USING THIS GUIDE

Benchmark honestly — including against the gaps.

For the two roles where we have a verified national figure, compare your actual offer against that figure and against whether the role is backflow-licensed (which should track meaningfully above the general grounds-maintenance baseline). For the four roles where we don't yet have a verified wage figure, treat the classification we've named as a starting point for your own research, not a number to quote to a candidate as if it came from BLS.

If you're not sure where a specific role or region should land, that's exactly the kind of question a specialized recruiting partner should be able to help you research with real data, not a guess.

We don't have a published time-to-fill figure for this trade — but the seasonal pattern is directionally clear.

There is no single published BLS or O*NET time-to-fill figure for commercial irrigation roles — that data isn't part of either release. What the tracked search data does show is a hiring-intent cluster that outweighs both the certification and salary clusters combined, which is consistent with active, time-pressured hiring rather than passive browsing.

The practical implication: if hiring pressure concentrates around seasonal ramp-up, roles filled reactively in-season are competing against every other contractor doing the same thing at the same time. A pipeline built in the off-season is the direct answer to that timing problem.

How the two verified irrigation-adjacent figures compare.

CLASSIFICATION	NATIONAL MEDIAN (BLS, VIA O*NET ONLINE)
Grounds Maintenance Workers (SOC 37-3011)	\$39,150/yr (\$18.82/hr)
Plumbers, Pipefitters, Steamfitters (SOC 47-2152)	\$63,800/yr (\$30.67/hr)

These are the only two wage figures in this guide sourced and verified from the Commercial Irrigation industry page. Landscape Architects (17-1012), First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping (37-1012), Construction Managers (11-9021), and Cost Estimators (13-1051) are named as the correct nearest classifications for four other roles on our roster, but we have not independently verified current wage figures for them and are not citing numbers we haven't sourced.



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