

A plumber installs, repairs, and maintains plumbing fixtures or systems in businesses, industries, or residences. The job may include installation and repair of pipes, fittings, and fixtures servicing the water supply, waste disposal, and heating systems. Plumbers must also haul supplies, cut and assemble plumbing materials, and use equipment and tools. Plumbing is a simple name for a job that has a wide variety of duties.

Chemical and material exposures are common for plumbers, so get training on the potential hazards at the job sites that you are assigned. Find out if your jobsite has asbestos, lead paint, or mold. Make sure that it is abated and cleaned up before you begin any work that may disturb it. If you must disturb lead, asbestos, or mold, get certified for the work and use the required work practices.



Be familiar with chemicals like solder, adhesives, and solvents that you use on the job. Use material safety data sheets (MSDS) to learn about the chemical properties, health hazards, and required personal protective equipment (PPE) that you will need. Avoid exposure to sewage by wearing gloves, coveralls, washing your hands, and decontaminating your equipment after use.

Plumbing work areas are not always easy to access or work in. Learn how to identify confined spaces and follow confined space procedures if you must enter one. Avoid oxygen deficient atmospheres and be aware that hydrogen sulfide, a byproduct of sewage decomposition, can build up to unhealthy levels. Use air monitors to assure your safety.



Plumbers work in wet environments, so wear appropriate footwear to avoid slips, trips, and falls. Make sure you have a sturdy shoe with a protective toe box and a non-slip sole. Keep your work areas clear of clutter and equipment to make it easier to move around and avoid a fall. You can get burns from hot equipment parts, steam lines, and the release of hot water or steam. Use heat-insulating gloves and eye/face shields and make sure to drain pipes before you open them up.

To avoid electric shock, only use power tools that are safe for a wet environment and that have a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). Be cautious when working on metal pipes; if you feel tingling when touching a metal pipe, stop work immediately.

A variety of hand tools, pipe cutting and bending equipment, and power tools is necessary for working on plumbing materials. Keep your tools and equipment, and their safety features, in good working order. Keep cutting equipment sharp so it will work properly. Cut away from your face and body to avoid cuts and punctures. Use eye protection when cutting or grinding to avoid eye injuries from flying particles.



When you work in awkward positions or perform repetitive manual tasks, you are at risk for a musculoskeletal disorder. Make sure to use proper lifting techniques and keep your back straight while working. Try to rotate your tasks and take a quick break every 30 minutes.