

How to Begin a Career as a Radiation Protection Technician in the Nuclear Power Industry

To begin a career as a Radiation Protection (RP) Technician, you must learn and demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to perform basic radiation protection tasks. The Westinghouse training program is designed to help you gain the knowledge and skills to get started.

This training program requires a significant amount of self-study. Typically, candidates who have limited or no RP experience will invest at least 60 to 100 hours of personal time to be successful. Candidates with this level of commitment usually develop into excellent RP Technicians in the nuclear industry. Candidates who successfully complete the training program will then be qualified for and can apply to openings for Westinghouse RP Technician positions.

Employment in the nuclear power industry requires candidates to have unescorted access into nuclear power plants. Unescorted access requires:

- Successful drug and alcohol testing
- A background investigation
- Psychological testing
- Minimum 18 years of age
- Have a high school diploma

Westinghouse provides training materials and facilitates hands-on training at no cost to you. You are responsible for any travel expenses required to participate in the training. If you are interested in pursuing this career path, continue reading below.

How do I enroll in the training?

- Our classes are full for the summer. We will begin enrolling trainees for the winter classes on October 1. Send an email to rptraining@westinghouse.com to request enrollment. Please include your full name, the email address for future communication, your phone number, and your city/state of residence. Also summarize any previous nuclear experience. You will then receive an email inviting you to register for e-learning courses. You must complete six e-learning courses covering technical fundamentals. You must understand these fundamentals to continue in the training program.
- After you have completed the e-learning courses, arrangements will be made for you to take a proctored exam to validate your understanding of the fundamentals. You must pass this 65 question exam with a score of 80% or greater. You will be limited to only two attempts so make sure you study and learn these fundamentals.

A Westinghouse instructor will contact you to help you through this training. The instructor will evaluate your preparation and readiness for the proctored exam and also help you close knowledge gaps that are identified. **If you are unable to complete the e-learning courses within 30 days, the instructor will assume that you are no longer interested in pursuing this career and access to the e-learning website will be removed.**

- After you have completed the proctored fundamentals exam, you will be registered for six additional e-learning courses to help you prepare for task qualification. The Westinghouse instructor will work with you to arrange for additional exams, hands-on training, and task performance evaluations which are normally performed in our facility in Lawrenceville, GA.

How many proctored exams are there?

You will need to complete seven (7) proctored exams. The topics for each exam are listed below.

1. **Junior Fundamentals (65 questions):** Atomic structure, nuclear interactions, radiation characteristics and interactions, biological effects from radiation, and monitoring and controlling human exposure to radiation.
2. **Operate Survey Instruments (30 questions):** Detector theory, instrument characteristics, pre-use inspections, and interpretation of readings.
3. **Radiation and Contamination Surveys (35 questions):** Survey techniques and documentation.
4. **Radiological Air Sampling (30 questions):** Conditions needing an air sample, setup and operation of air samplers, and sample analysis.
5. **Post Low Level Hazards (25 questions):** Types of postings, criteria for posting, posting methods, and labeling radioactive materials.
6. **Respond to Personnel Contamination (25):** Survey requirements, types and causes of contamination, and records.
7. **Control of Radioactive Material (30 questions):** Requirements to move and store radioactive material.

How should I prepare and take the exams?

When you access the website for the e-learning courses, you will see the courses assigned to you. You must work the courses in the following order and make an 80% on the Junior Fundamentals exam before you can proceed:

1. RP Training Program Description
2. Atomic Structure and Interaction
3. Radiological Health Effects
4. Radiological Measurements
5. Radiation Protection Practices and Limits
6. Radiological Aspects of Nuclear Plants

Once you have mastered the learning objectives in these courses, work with the Westinghouse instructor to arrange for the proctored Junior Fundamentals exam. This should be completed as soon as possible.

After you have successfully completed the Junior Fundamentals exam, you will be assigned the courses for the Jr Task Qualification Learning Path. These courses are for the initial procedures that you will be qualified to perform. The courses may be completed in any order.

- RP 02.01, Operate Portable Instruments
- RP 02.02, Radiation & Contamination Surveys
- RP 02.03, Radiological Air Sampling
- RP 02.04, Post Low Level Hazards
- RP 02.06, Personnel Contamination Monitoring
- RP 02.07, Control Rad Material

How do I complete the qualification process?

After you have completed the courses, you will be invited to our week long class. This class will include classroom training, exams for each procedure and hands-on training for each of the tasks listed above. You will be provided an opportunity to learn how to operate actual instruments and equipment. You will be able to practice the tasks that you will be expected to perform. To complete task qualification, you will have to be observed performing each task independently and correctly without any coaching by an instructor. This is referred to as a performance evaluation. Hands-on training and performance evaluations can be completed during a one-week class in Lawrenceville, Georgia. These classes will be scheduled as needed.

What is the next step in this career path?

Once you have completed the process explained above, you will be qualified to work as a Task Only Junior Technician. This will allow you to perform productive work at a nuclear power plant and assist other technicians. You need to be assertive to see, learn, and experience as many work activities as possible in a nuclear power plant to understand how RP provides support to protect workers. You need to gain the experience to help you complete the remaining three junior qualifications listed below.

1. Control Access to High Radiation Areas
2. Control HEPA Vacuums and Ventilation Equipment
3. Perform Low Risk Radiological Job Coverage

Each of these qualifications also requires completion of an exam and a performance evaluation. When you are ready to complete these qualifications, please send an email to rptraining@westinghouse.com for guidance on where you can complete the exams and performance evaluations. Once you have completed these qualifications, you will be a fully qualified Junior Technician.

After you have worked as a Junior Technician for a couple of years, you should be eligible to become a Senior RP Technician and complete the six senior task qualifications.

The complete training and qualification process is explained in the first e-learning course, “RP Training Program Description.”