

## How to Become a Tow Boat Captain

For those who love the water and a challenge, a career as a tow boat captain offers many exciting opportunities. Towing boat captains provide necessary supplies to the country while enjoying the freedom that a career on the water brings. For the men and women who master the tow, the requirements and day-to-day activities of serving as a tow boat captain consist of many duties.

These duties include steering vessels on the Great Lakes and western rivers while protecting a variety of goods. A tow boat captain must helm a barge or ship safely into a port. The work demands logic and the ability to problem-solve in terms of safety, time, and haul size. This career also requires stamina and excellent communication skills.

A tow boat captain hauls towing vessels under the guidelines of the United States Coast Guard (USCG). The USCG issues all licenses for tow boat pilots. According to a 2019 salary report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median salary for a tow boat captain is \$72,340. Tow boat captain careers also provide plenty of downtime if desired.

Obtaining a license helps to break into these other maritime careers:

- Maritime operations inland, near-coastal, and offshore
- Rescue and relief work
- Commercial container ship docking and undocking
- Charter boating for various tours

Contact us when you're looking to put your tow boat pilot license to use. We work with all levels of maritime professionals. Now, let's look at the history, education, and experience requirements for a tow boat captain.

## American History of Towing Vessels

Knowing the history of towing vessels in America is important for success in this industry. History provides practical knowledge that can serve as the building blocks of innovation on the water. History also unites all maritime professionals who choose to work in this noble calling.

In the 1800s, paddle-wheeler steamboats made river travel more reliable and efficient. In 1807, Robert Fulton piloted his Clermont up the Hudson River, connecting the country via a modern mode of transport. Over time, vessels sailed faster, expanding possibilities for traveling and the transport of goods.

In 1859, a young man named Samuel Langhorne Clemens got his steamboat pilot license. Eventually, Clemens took the boatman term "Mark Twain" as a pen name. Twain's stories about life on, and around, the Mississippi inspired many readers to love the idea of river living and all the adventures that came with working on the river.

What could be better than seeing America and earning money to do it during a time when many people never got to leave the town they were born in?

Each year, around 5,500 US-flag tugboats and towboats, along with some 31,000 barges, move 763 million tons of cargo for the country. That's why the education and experience requirements for this leadership position set the bar high for success.

## **Education and Experience Requirements for a Tow Boat Pilot**

Whether you call it a wheelhouse or a pilothouse, attaining a tow boat captain license from the USCG puts you in charge of that realm on towing vessels. The standards remain high for being in charge of the bridge. The environment you work in will vary according to the size of the vessel, the cargo, and the route or type of water. Some environments prove much more demanding in terms of requirements. However, there's something for everyone who has the desire to take on this prestigious position.

**Educational Requirements.** A recent survey shows that 30% of tow boat captains obtain a bachelor's degree. Ten percent obtain a master's degree. Some take charge in the wheelhouse with an associate's degree. It's also possible to become a tow boat captain with only a high school degree or a GED, depending on your personal goals as a maritime professional.

**Service Time Requirements.** Service time refers to the time spent on the water aboard any vessel working. These requirements differ for each vessel, route, and haul, but each must comply with USCG requirements. A candidate needs over a year of service time in another position to even consider working as a towing boat captain.

Time on the waterways and networking with other maritime professionals will shape the foundation of your career. You will learn more about the vessels, hauls, and routes open to you and determine the path your career should take in terms of personal likes and goals.

## **A Dynamic Career as a Tow Boat Captain**

A towing boat captain's career can evolve. You might start with one type of license, then learn more to get a new license. Once you determine the vessels, routes, and hauls that interest you, your career as a tow boat captain can expand in endless ways.

## **Pursue Your Dream of a Towing Boat Captain Career**

The towing boat industry needs capable men and women to transport the goods that help America thrive. As the country continues to grow and innovate, towing boat pilots continue to be in demand. The time to answer the demand is now.

We are here to help you achieve your towing boat captain goals. Contact J.F. Brennan Company, Inc. to find out more.