

# Global Foresight, Inc. 2006 Report on Industry Trends

## Plumbing

Plumbing is an essential trade that is closely linked to the construction industry; the industry as a whole represents one of the most profitable and largest sources of construction employment. Plumbers are in a key position to influence the water efficiency, sustainable site, energy, fire protection, and pollution systems of residential and commercial projects. The scope of the occupation will broaden over the next decade as plumbers are called upon to play an increasingly important role in water conservation and green building design.

### Employment Outlook

Plumbing encompasses a large range of jobs. While a plumber is the first occupation associated with the industry, pipelayers, pipefitters and steamfitters represent a sizeable portion of the job market; new construction and maintenance are drivers of these occupations. Over the next ten years, the employment outlook is considered to be excellent. The lack of trained and qualified servicemen and the expected increased retirement rate in these trades over the next decade highlight the opportunities within the industry for potential jobs.

(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics)

### Trends & Emerging Issues

#### Macro Trends:

- The incorporation of information technology into all facets of building design and home products is revolutionizing the construction industry.
- Sustainable and eco-friendly design is a major focus of the building and construction industry.
- States, rather than the federal government, are leading the way in passing environmental legislation.
- Consumers are increasingly educated regarding construction products and materials, resulting in a demand for more sophisticated and multi-functional products.
- The national focus on energy is filtering down to individual consumers, who are increasingly aware of personal energy consumption.
- The current pace of innovation in the materials industry is unparalleled; more new materials have been created in the last 20 years than in the prior history of materials science.

#### Market Trends:

- The plumbing industry will experience a significant workforce reduction (almost 200,000) over the next 10 years due to retirement. In addition, a shortfall of a shortfall of 3,000-4,000 plumbing contracting firms annually is expected.
- Hispanics are under-represented among plumbing contractors. Hispanic representation in the construction trades more than doubled between 1993 and 2003, to about 15 percent of the workforce, but they are less represented in the skilled trades.

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- Unions have traditionally been a primary source for training plumbers; however, younger workers place less value on union membership than older workers. Thus the burden for training plumbers will fall on manufacturers and other industry participants such as Home Depot.
- Demand for plumbing products in the United States will reach \$9.8 billion in 2006.
- A surge in water consumption legislation in the previous decade has prompted manufacturers to create an array of more efficient and environmentally friendly products from low-flow and waterless to dual-flush and macerating fixtures.
- Several recently formed industry groups which encourage sustainable construction methods, such as the U.S. Green Building Council, are expected to significantly influence the future of skilled trades such as plumbing.

### Forecasts

- In the next decade "smart" home and bath products will be the norm, such as the 'Intelligent Toilet' system made in Japan which can measure sugar levels in urine, blood pressure, body fat and weight.
- In the ideal environmentally-correct home of tomorrow, toilets will flush water recycled from the washing-machine or dish-washer.
- Certification of "green plumbers" will be standard practice by 2015.

### Resources

#### *Associations:*

[American Society of Sanitary Engineering](#)  
[American Water Works Association \(AWWA\)](#)

#### *Articles and Reports:*

[www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)