

SAFETY AND RISK MANAGER

SANTA MARGARITA WATER DISTRICT | RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, CALIFORNIA

ANNUAL SALARY: \$129,068.94-\$177,923.20 DOE/DOQ



CAREER OPPORTUNITY

THE SANTA MARGARITA WATER DISTRICT (SMWD) is seeking an innovative **Safety and Risk Manager** to trailblaze the District's safety and risk management efforts. A critical component of the Human Resources Department, this role provides District-wide leadership over occupational safety, accident prevention, regulatory compliance, training, and risk management programs, with a strong emphasis on building consistency and a culture where safety is embedded into daily operations. SMWD is at a key moment of transformation and growth, and this is unique opportunity to truly reshape the safety program for a dynamic and forward-thinking water district. The ideal candidate brings a strong technical foundation in safety and risk management and an understanding of water and wastewater operations, paired with the passion, presence, and judgment needed to build trust and effectively drive change. *Set the standard and advance safety measures across the District; apply today!*



SMWD BY THE NUMBERS



1 Groundwater Treatment Plant



1,700 MILES of Pipeline



2 ADVANCED WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS



233 FACILITIES



Industry First Advanced Recycled Water Treatment Plant



9,500 Acre-Feet of Recycled Water Reservoirs

[Click here](#) for more details about SMWD's complex infrastructure



THE COMMUNITY

NESTLED IN THE CANYONS OF SOUTH ORANGE COUNTY and not far from the bustle of the Los Angeles metro area, Santa Margarita Water District is headquartered in beautiful Rancho Santa Margarita. The District serves ten distinctive communities, including the cities of Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, and San Juan Capistrano, as well as the unincorporated communities of Coto de Caza, Las Flores, Ladera Ranch, Talega in San Clemente, and the Rancho Mission Viejo villages of Sendero, Esencia, and Rienda. With year-round temperate weather, proximity to ocean beaches, and set against breathtaking canyons, these communities offer a slower pace than the northern end of the County, while still providing easy access to all the amenities of the second-largest metro area in the US.

Residents enjoy access to parks, trails, and nearby natural areas that support an active, outdoor-oriented lifestyle year-round, along with highly regarded educational institutions and an engaged community culture. From the meandering streets, period architecture, and quaint historic downtown of San Juan Capistrano; to family-friendly Mission Viejo, with its excellent schools and beautiful recreational lake; and Rancho Mission Viejo's meticulously master-planned communities, incorporating thoughtful touches from wellness centers to summer camps, the District's service area reflects a diverse mix of historic neighborhoods and modern amenities. These communities are also characterized by responsible growth and a strong emphasis on environmental stewardship and long-term sustainability—values that align closely with SMWD's mission.

THE ORGANIZATION

THE SANTA MARGARITA WATER DISTRICT (SMWD) is a fiscally healthy and sustainability-focused retail water district located in southern Orange County, California, providing high-quality drinking water, recycled water, and wastewater services to 200,000+ residents across a 111 square mile service area. Governed by a five-member elected Board of Directors and with an annual budget of approximately \$170 million, the District is at a pivotal moment as it works to build and align a new organizational structure focused on innovation, collaborative leadership, and long-term sustainability. With a mid-sized workforce of over 200 employees, the District has added a number of strategic new positions for this fiscal year, with the goal of centering operational agility and targeted growth to meet current demand and future needs. Leveraging meaningful regional, state, and federal impact in water policy and resource management, SMWD is recognized for its award-winning conservation efforts and campaigns, and places a strong emphasis on leadership development through a well-received internal leadership training program. As the District continues to grow as a cohesive, high-performing organization, it seeks team-oriented leaders who value accountability, collaboration, and service excellence in advancing SMWD's mission and public trust.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DISTRICT](#)



THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT SERVES AS THE STRATEGIC PARTNER for SMWD's workforce by providing a full range of services, including core human resources, safety and risk management functions, all geared toward maintaining a safe, healthy, and fulfilling work environment for District employees. The two divisions interact extensively and collaboratively.

[READ MORE](#)



THE JOB

REPORTING TO THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES, the Safety and Risk Manager provides strategic leadership over the District's comprehensive safety and risk management programs, establishing policy direction, ensuring regulatory compliance, and advancing a proactive culture of safety across the organization. The role oversees District-wide risk assessment, safety training, inspections, and incident investigations; supports emergency preparedness; and implements performance metrics to monitor trends, reduce exposure, and drive continuous improvement. The position also provides high-level administration and oversight of the District's workers' compensation and general liability programs, including management of the third-party administrator contracts and strategic oversight of the District's asset and liability insurance portfolio. The Safety and Risk Manager oversees one Safety & Risk Analyst and partners closely with the Human Resources team and operational leadership to align safety and risk initiatives with District priorities. Serving as a trusted advisor, the role guides management on risk exposure and compliance obligations while maintaining a visible presence in the field to reinforce accountability and advance a culture of safety that protects employees and District assets.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE HAS A PASSION FOR ADVANCING A PROACTIVE organization-wide culture of safety through thoughtful, innovative approaches. This will be a leader with the drive to take ownership of District-wide programs, with a strong sense of initiative and sound independent judgment. Someone who can effectively balance accountability with flexibility will thrive in this role – upholding standards and ensuring follow-through while also working collaboratively with managers to solve operational challenges and work towards common goals. From a technical perspective, the ideal Safety and Risk Manager will be a seasoned, collaborative safety professional with a strong understanding of health and safety programs and regulatory requirements, workers’ compensation, risk management, and water, wastewater, or other utility operations; experience in public sector organizations is a plus. Because the Safety and Risk Manager will work as part of a highly collaborative HR team and advise management and employees in the field, an understanding of employee and labor relations, or the desire to grow into this area, is valued.

Santa Margarita Water District is building an intentional culture of collaboration, innovation, and forward momentum. Leaders who combine vision with execution will thrive in this environment, and those with the genuine desire to work together, communicate, and build consensus will find a like-minded team, and the opportunity to shape the future of water resource management in this dynamic region.

Core Competencies of the Ideal Candidate will include:

Strategic Thinking: Anticipates long-term organizational needs, aligns operational goals with larger priorities, and creatively approaches problem-solving.

Team Orientation: Approaches challenges and day-to-day tasks as an opportunity to collaborate with talented colleagues and staff.

Communication: Listens actively and seeks to understand; maintains an intentionally high-volume, real-time communication flow with executive leadership team to ensure shared context and strategic alignment.

Relationship-Building: Builds trust and credibility with executive leadership, the Board of Directors, staff, and external partners.

Talent Development: Prioritizes mentorship and knowledge-sharing to empower staff and foster growth; actively promotes leadership development and succession planning.

Change Agility: Remains adaptable to

evolving organizational needs, builds change-resilient teams, and cultivates a solutions-focused mindset.

Innovation: Acts as a driving force advancing service excellence, forward-thinking projects, and thoughtful organizational change; creates space for new ideas, risk-taking, and out-of-the-box thinking.

Vision: Employs big-picture thinking, works collaboratively with the executive leadership team to take cutting-edge ideas to execution, and communicates organizational vision compellingly to staff to build alignment and buy-in.

Mission Focus: Believes in and models SMWD’s mission, vision, and values including service excellence, environmental sustainability and resource stewardship, fiscal responsibility and transparency, and strengthening communities through inter-agency and regional relationships; creates an inclusive environment where employees feel supported and connected to the District’s mission.



Employment Standards

Any combination of experience and training that would likely provide the required knowledge and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the knowledge and abilities would be:

Education: Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with major coursework in occupational health and safety, safety or environmental engineering, or a related field.

Experience: At least six (6) progressively responsible years of experience working in an environmental health and safety program, including at least two (2) years of supervisory experience.

Licenses / Certifications:

- Possession of or the ability to obtain a valid California Class C driver's license and the ability to maintain insurability under the District's vehicle insurance program.
- Annual certification for CPR, First Aid, Confined-Space Entry and use of Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) per OSHA requirements are required for some assignments.

PREFERRED

- Public agency experience administering Cal/OSHA regulations and field training.
- Certified Instructor by the Department of Labor on OSHA Standards for construction and general industries.
- Certified Safety Professional (CSP), Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) designation or similar professional certification.
- Certifications issued by American Water Works Association (AWWA) or recognized industrial safety organizations on topics relevant to conducting safety training and responding to hazardous materials and waste operations incidents.

Salary & Benefits

This position will receive an annual salary of **\$129,068.94–\$177,923.20 DOE/DOQ**, **PLUS** an attractive benefits package that includes:

CalPERS Retirement: The Classic members' formula is 2.7% at 55 with an employee contribution of 8%, while Public Employees' Pension Reform Act (PEPRA) members have a formula of 2% at 62 with an employee contribution of 7.5%.

Medical: Multiple plans, including PPO and HMO options, are available. The District pays 100% of the cost for the employee's coverage (not to exceed the amount of the highest HMO plan); the District will additionally contribute 50% of the premium cost for dependents.

Dental Insurance: Both HMO and PPO plans are available. The District covers the employee at 100%, regardless of the selected plan; dependent coverage is available at the District's rates.

Life Insurance: A term life insurance benefit is provided.

Vision Insurance: The District offers a Vision Service Plan (VSP) and pays the full cost for employees and their dependents.

Paid Time Off: The District has a generous combined program for time off, with a typical starting accrual rate of 140 hours annually, which increases with years of service.

Holidays: The District observes 11½ holidays per year.

Social Security: The District does not pay into Social Security and provides a private disability program at no cost to the employees.

Other Benefits: Other employee benefit programs are available, including deferred compensation with partial matching and a flexible spending program for medical expenses.



How to Apply

For first consideration, apply by **MARCH 23** at:



WBCP JOB BOARD

SAVE THE DATES. Round one virtual interviews will take place on **APRIL 16**. Finalists will move forward to round two in-person interviews on **APRIL 24**. *Selected candidates must be available for both dates.*

QUESTIONS? Please contact your recruiter, **Lauren Gerson-Greene**, with any inquiries: **866.929.WBCP (9227)** toll free **541.664.0376** direct lauren@wbcpsc.com