



Santa Margarita Water District

invites your interest in the position of

Director of Engineering



**Santa Margarita
Water District**

Our Mission

The Santa Margarita Water District provides our customers with quality water and wastewater service – maximizing human, environmental, and financial resources – to help guide South Orange County’s water and wastewater needs into the next century.



Recruitment Services Provided by
Ralph Andersen & Associates

Outstanding Opportunity

The Santa Margarita Water District (District) is seeking an innovative, solution-oriented, and influential professional to serve as the District's Director of Engineering. The individual will contribute across the organization as a valued member of the executive leadership team. The ideal candidate will be highly team-oriented, fostering collaboration internally along with our valued regional partners. The position reports directly to the Office of the General Manager and will contribute a variety of key, agency-wide initiatives to support the mission of the District.

Organizational Overview

Located within southern California's beautiful Orange County, the District provides safe, reliable drinking water, recycled water, and wastewater services to over 220,000 residents in ten unique communities: Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, San Juan Capistrano, and the communities of Coto de Caza, Las Flores, Ladera Ranch, Villages of Sendero, Esencia, Rienda, and Talega in San Clemente. The District is the second largest retail water agency in Orange County.

The vast majority of the District's drinking water supply is imported from hundreds of miles away through the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the Municipal Water District of Orange County. To ensure the stability of the region's water supply, the District continues to make generational investments in developing local, reliable, and sustainable water supply programs, reducing its dependence on imported water.

The District employs approximately 216 full-time employees and has an annual operating budget of \$124 million. The District's capital improvement program budget is over \$250 million as of FY 2025 and anticipated to increase based on District initiatives. The District is governed by a five-member Board of Directors. Each Director is elected by the public to represent a specific division within the District.





The Position

The Director of Engineering will provide leadership and direction to the department ensuring a high-performance, service-oriented environment that aligns with the District's mission, vision, goals, values, and organizational culture. The individual will have a demonstrated career history of leading people and leading change. This will also include directing and mentoring staff to achieve a highly effective and efficient team.

The Director of Engineering is responsible for directing and integrating programs and will manage and inspire an accomplished and motivated engineering team. This position will oversee local and regional system planning, water resource planning, engineering design and construction management, and development services. The incumbent also functions as a member of the District's executive management team and participates actively in addressing issues of concern to the District, which at times may not have a direct impact on the incumbent's area of specialization.

The Ideal Candidate

The ideal candidate will need to be confident and collaborative, and able to combine thoughtful leadership with an understanding of the impact engineering-related decisions have on overall operational effectiveness and the culture of the department. The Director of Engineering will embrace a philosophy that proactively reaches out to management and employees in a consultative fashion and truly believes in the benefit of working for and promoting a healthy public organization to the fullest. A sense of humor, positive “can do” attitude, and dose of humility will ultimately lead to long-term success at the District.

The ideal candidate will be an aspiring leader with a strong commitment to public service and best practices with a career history that supports the ability to:

- Direct the design and construction of multiple, diverse major engineering studies and projects through staff and outside consultants to meet project completion deadlines.
- Develop long range capital improvement program (CIP) for the District including identification of potential projects to expand, improve and/or replace all of the District’s capital assets.
- With subordinate managers, coordinate capital improvement and replacement design and construction activities including inspection; develop engineering plans and specifications for District projects.
- Represents the District in negotiations and interactions with Board Members, other industry and governmental agencies; serves as a District representative to professional industry, community, customer, and regulatory groups and individuals.
- Provide day-to-day leadership to assigned staff; plan and manage department staff work assignments, and monitor work plans to achieve departmental goals and deadlines.
- Manage the performance of departmental staff; interview and select staff; establish performance requirements and personal development targets; address performance deficiencies and make recommendations regarding progressive discipline when appropriate.
- Prepare and/or review agreements with developers and other agencies.
- Manage and/or assist in the preparation of various grant and loan applications.
- Develop engineering department operating and District capital improvement budgets.
- Interpret direction and assignments from General Manager’s office and Board of Directors; interpret District policies, and applicable laws and regulations to ensure compliance within assigned areas of responsibility.

Qualifying Education and Experience

Education: Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with a major in civil engineering or a closely related field.

Experience: At least ten (10) years of progressively responsible management or supervisory experience in water or wastewater engineering; or an equivalent combination of training and experience. Experience in a public agency is preferred.

Certifications: Registration by the State of California as a Professional Engineer is required.

Top candidates will be well-balanced in skills and experience and will have a comprehensive knowledge of the professional practices and principles related to engineering such as planning, project design and construction, environmental compliance including CEQA processes and requirements, plan check, inspection, prevailing wage regulations, environmental and regulatory compliance, worker safety, and Brown Act compliance.



Compensation

The annual salary range for this position is highly competitive and commensurate with qualifications and responsibilities similar to other agencies of similar size and scope in the region. Salary will be negotiated based on the candidate's experience and qualifications.

The salary will be supported by a benefits package including:

- **CalPERS retirement** – Classic members formula is 2.7% at 55 with a contribution of 8%, while PEPRA members have formula of 2% at 62 and a contribution of 7.5%.
- **Medical** – District provides medical plan options and pays for employee coverage equal to highest HMO plan, and shares costs for dependents.
- **Dental** – HMO and PPO plans are available and paid for by the District.
- **Vision** – VSP plan is paid for employees and their dependents.
- **Life insurance** – a term life insurance benefit is provided.
- **Paid Time Off** – the District has a generous program for sick and vacation time off.
- **Holiday** – the District provides 11 ½ 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 such as deferred compensation with partial matching, a flexible spending program for medical expenses, and other benefit programs.

To Be Considered

This is a confidential recruitment and will be handled accordingly throughout the various stages of the process. References will not be contacted until mutual interest has been established. Candidates are encouraged to apply early in the process. First review of resumes will take place in mid-April 2025. This recruitment may close at any time once a significant pool of qualified candidates has been established. It is anticipated that the most highly qualified candidates will be invited for an on-site interview. Selection and an appointment are anticipated in May 2025. The selected candidate would ideally join the District on a mutually agreed upon date shortly thereafter. The District wishes for a smooth transition and every effort will be made to ensure this happens.

Electronic submittals are strongly preferred to Ralph Andersen & Associates at apply@ralphandersen.com and should include a compelling cover letter and comprehensive resume.

Confidential inquiries are welcomed to Mr. John Rossi at (916) 630-4900.



The Santa Margarita Water District is an Equal Opportunity Employer

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