

Transportation – Industry Overview

Air, rail, road, and water transportation move the American people, their business goods and their personal items - every day of the year - 24/7.

All require drivers and operators, dispatchers and attendants, mechanics and engineers to keep them moving safely from one destination to the next. Loading and unloading, warehouse and dock crews are working too - keeping things moving. Each sector has its own unique and rewarding career options.

- **Trucking and warehousing** - the open road, where truckers get us the goods we all depend on from the warehouses to our stores and the job opportunities are plentiful.

Many jobs in truck transportation and warehousing require a high school education, although an increasing number of workers have at least some college education. Whereas many states allow those who are 18 years old to drive trucks within state borders, the U.S. Department of Transportation establishes minimum qualifications for truck drivers engaged in interstate commerce. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations require truck drivers to be at least 21 years old, have at least 20/40 vision and good hearing, and be able to read and speak English. They must also have good driving records. In addition, drivers must have a state commercial driver's license (CDL), for which they must pass a written examination and a skills test operating the type of vehicle they will be driving. Individual companies often have additional requirements applicants must meet. Many truck drivers enter the occupation by attending training schools for truck drivers.

- **Railroad** - the railroad system, which helped built the American economy into the powerhouse it is today, is still going strong so turn that fascination with model trains into a career.

Railroads require that applicants for many positions have a minimum of a high school diploma or its equivalent. Physical stamina is required for many entry-level jobs. Employers require railroad transportation job applicants to pass a physical examination, drug and alcohol screening, and a criminal background check. Many rail transportation employees work nights, weekends, and holidays because trains operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Rail yard workers spend most of their time outdoors in varying weather. Entry-level conductors must generally be at least 21 years of age and are either trained by their employers or required to complete a formal conductor training program. Applicants for locomotive engineer jobs must be at least 21 years old. Employers almost always fill engineer positions with workers who have experience in other railroad-operating occupations.

- **Air** - goods, not just people, are regularly transported by air when it just has to be there.

The skills and experience needed by workers in air transportation differ by occupation. Some jobs may be entered directly from high school, while others require extensive specialized training. Most airline positions involve extensive customer service contact requiring strong interpersonal and communication skills. Mechanics and pilots require extensive specialized formal training and must be certified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA); skills for many other air transportation occupations can be learned on the job or through company-sponsored training.

- **Water** - whether on navigable rivers, along the coasts or across oceans, merchant shipping is a vital component to the transportation industry.

Entry, training, and educational requirements for most water transportation occupations are established and regulated by the U.S. Coast Guard. All officers and operators of commercially operated vessels must be licensed by the Coast Guard, which offers various kinds of licenses, depending on the position and type of vessel. Sailors and unlicensed engineers working on U.S. flagged deep-sea and Great Lakes vessels must hold a Coast Guard-issued document. A medical certificate of excellent health attesting to vision, color perception, and general physical condition is required for higher level deckhands and unlicensed engineers. No special training or experience is needed to become a seaman or deckhand on vessels operating in harbors or on rivers or other waterways.

- **Transit** - buses, subways, and light rails all make our cities the bustling places they are.

Key occupations in the transit and ground passenger transportation sector include transit and intercity bus drivers, bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists, and first-line supervisors/managers of transportation and material-moving machine and vehicle operators. Bus drivers must be courteous and have strong customer service skills. In addition, federal regulations require drivers who operate commercial motor vehicles to hold a CDL from the state in which they live. Although many persons qualify for diesel service technician and mechanic jobs through years of on-the-job training, employers prefer to hire graduates of formal training programs. Many community colleges and trade and vocational schools offer programs in diesel repair. In addition to the hands-on aspects of the training, many institutions teach communication skills, customer service, basic understanding of .75

- Physics and logical thought. The most significant source of training for first-line supervisors/managers of transportation and material moving machine and vehicle operators is work experience in a related occupation.
- **Scenic sightseeing** - this transportation sector is one where you and your passengers get to see all of the natural beauty our country has to offer.

Within the scenic and sightseeing transportation and support activities sector, aircraft mechanics and service technicians and customer service representatives are two of the primary occupations. Most mechanics learn their job in one of about 200 trade schools certified by the FAA. About one-third of these schools award two and four year degrees in avionics, aviation technology, or aviation maintenance management. Aircraft mechanics must do careful and thorough work that requires a high degree of mechanical aptitude. Employers seek applicants who are self-motivated, hard-working, enthusiastic, and able to diagnose and solve complex mechanical problems. A high school diploma or the equivalent is the most common educational requirement for customer service representatives. Basic computer knowledge and good interpersonal skills also are important qualities for people who wish to be successful in the field. Because customer service representatives constantly interact with the public, strong communication and problem-solving skills are a must.

As you can see, there is no limit to where you can find a transportation career. Get started discovering what is most appealing to you since America needs transportation workers to keep us moving!

(Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)