

High wages after high school—  
without a bachelor's degree



**W**hat's the best way to enter a high-paying career without having a bachelor's degree? Well, there are lots of ways. An associate's degree, a postsecondary non-degree award, or a high school diploma—often coupled with work experience in a related occupation, on-the-job training, or both—can lead to a job that really pays off.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 80 occupations typically require less than a bachelor's degree to enter and had median annual wages of over \$50,000 in May 2010. Some of them had median wages that were much higher than that.

The occupations are diverse and wide ranging. They include different types of managers, technicians, and repairers, as well as registered nurses, commercial divers, and fashion designers. And they are employed across nearly all industries.

This article looks at these occupations in greater detail. It uses BLS data to show how much workers earn and the number of expected job openings from 2010 to 2020. It also explains the education and training workers typically need to enter these occupations and to become competent at performing them.

The first section of the article is about education and earnings—and describes the terms used by BLS. The second section presents high-paying occupations for three education levels: associate's degree, postsecondary non-degree award, and high school diploma. Tables highlight information about the occupations. Accompanying text describes the five top-paying occupations in each education category. And ways to learn more about the occupations in this article—and others not described here—are provided at the end.

## Education and earnings

More than 60 percent of U.S. workers don't have a bachelor's degree, BLS data show. And some of these workers without a bachelor's degree earned more than \$33,840, the median annual wage for all workers in May 2010. Wages are affected by many factors, one of which is education. Generally, people with



more education have higher wages than those with less education. But you don't always need a bachelor's degree to land a high-paying job.

Lots of occupations with high wages don't require a bachelor's degree. Many of these occupations, however, require other education after high school, such as an associate's degree or postsecondary non-degree award. And those that don't need more education almost always involve some form of work experience or on-the-job training.

### BLS education and training categories

BLS assigns three categories to occupations. The categories are as follows:

- Typical education needed for entry
- Work experience in a related occupation
- Typical on-the-job training needed to attain competency.

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The category assignments are designed to give a more complete picture of the typical requirements for workers to enter or attain competency in an occupation. Workers usually need some combination of education, experience, and training to get a job in their occupation of choice.

There are eight education levels. The three highest levels of education are doctoral or professional degree, master's degree, and bachelor's degree. Occupations from two other education levels—some college but no degree and less than a high school diploma—are not included in this article because so few of them had high wages. This article focuses on high-earning occupations at three education levels below the bachelor's degree:

- Associate's degree
- Postsecondary non-degree award
- High school diploma

The occupations discussed in this article typically do not require a bachelor's degree to enter. In any occupation, however, workers may have more or less education than what is typically needed for entry.

Requirements for work experience in a related occupation are as follows:

- More than 5 years
- 1 to 5 years
- Less than 1 year
- None

On-the-job training assignments are as follows:

- Internship/residency
- Apprenticeship
- Long-term on-the-job training (more than 12 months)
- Moderate-term on-the-job training (1 to 12 months)
- Short-term on-the-job training (1 month or less)
- None

## Money—and more

The occupations in this article all had median annual wages greater than \$50,000 in May 2010. A median annual wage means that half of workers in the occupation earned more than that amount, and half earned less.

But wages are only part of any career equation. Type of work, working conditions, job satisfaction, and other factors influence occupation choice.

**Money matters.** Not all workers in these occupations earned more than \$50,000, although some made considerably more. For example, the median annual wage for loan officers was \$56,490 in May 2010—but the lowest earning 10 percent of workers made \$30,930 or less. And the highest earning 10 percent made \$112,370 or more.

Wages include hourly, weekly, or annual pay that people receive for the work they do. Tips, sales commissions, and production bonuses are also included. But overtime and nonproduction bonuses are not.

All of the wage data in this article come from the BLS Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey. The data are from 2010, the base year of the BLS 2010–20 employment projections. The OES survey does not collect information on self-employed workers, so the data do not include the wages of these workers.

**Other factors.** Another factor to consider when choosing an occupation is the type of work you would like to do. For example, some people might enjoy working with objects or tools; others might prefer managing people or projects.

Working conditions also influence career decisions: some occupations with high median wages, for example, require long hours. High-paying occupations can also be stressful. Or they might involve nonstandard schedules or difficult or hazardous work environments.

Plus, a job's rewards aren't always in the form of pay. Workers in some occupations, such as those in childcare or social services, are willing to earn less for the personal satisfaction they get from their jobs. Other non-wage benefits include vacation time, flexible schedules, and health insurance.

When thinking about which occupation to pursue, you might also consider whether you'll be likely to find a job in that field. The number of projected job openings in an occupation is one indication of whether jobs are likely to be

plentiful or scarce. Each of the tables in the next section provides data on projected job openings.

Still other factors, such as advancement potential and job security, may also come into play when selecting a career.

## High-paying occupations by education level

Most high-earning workers who don't have a bachelor's degree have an associate's degree, a postsecondary non-degree award, or a high school diploma as their highest level of education.

The following sections present information about the five highest earning occupations within a particular level of education. Each of the sections also includes a table, with occupations ranked by median annual wage.

### Associate's degree

Healthcare is expected to be among the fastest-growing industries over the next decade—and an associate's degree is a great way to prepare for many high-paying, high-demand careers in this industry. Nearly half of the occupations shown in table 1 (on page 28) are related to healthcare. And one healthcare

occupation—registered nurses—is projected to have over 1.2 million job openings from 2010 to 2020.

In addition to healthcare occupations, high-paying occupations at this education level include technicians, managers, and others. In May 2010, 20 occupations that typically require an associate's degree for entry had median annual wages of more than \$50,000.

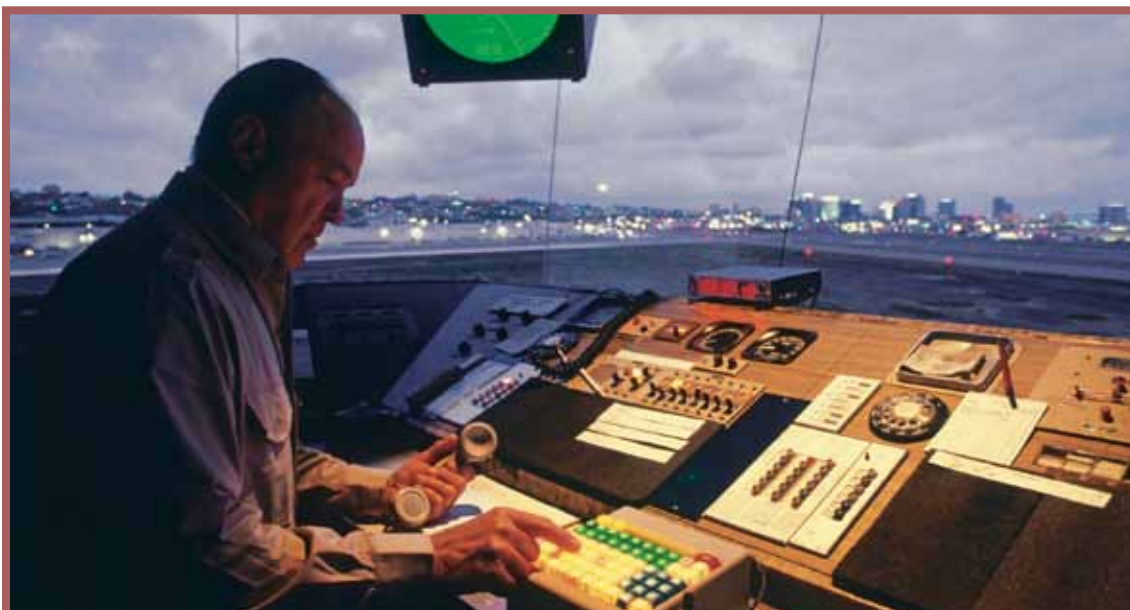
An associate's degree usually requires between 2 and 4 years of full-time academic study after high school. These programs often prepare students for a specific career. For example, occupational therapy assistants generally must complete a 2-year occupational therapy assistant program.

Associate's degree programs are offered at public community colleges, private 2-year colleges, for-profit technical institutes, and some 4-year colleges and universities.

Earning an associate's degree can be a relatively fast track to high earnings: most of the high-wage associate's degree level jobs don't require on-the-job training or work experience in a related occupation.

**Air traffic controllers.** These workers monitor and direct the movement of aircraft.

*(Continued on page 29)*



*In May 2010, air traffic controllers had the highest median annual wage among occupations in which workers typically don't need a bachelor's degree.*

**Table 1: Occupations typically requiring an associate's degree**

Occupation	Median annual wage, May 2010 <sup>1</sup>	Projected job openings, 2010-20	Work experience <sup>2</sup>	On-the-job training
Air traffic controllers	\$108,040	10,200	None	Long-term on-the-job training
General and operations managers	94,400	410,100	1 to 5 years	None
Construction managers	83,860	120,400	More than 5 years	None
Radiation therapists	74,980	6,700	None	None
Nuclear medicine technologists	68,560	7,500	None	None
Dental hygienists	68,250	104,900	None	None
Nuclear technicians	68,090	3,300	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Registered nurses	64,690	1,207,400	None	None
Diagnostic medical sonographers	64,380	31,700	None	None
Aerospace engineering and operations technicians	58,080	1,700	None	None
Engineering technicians, except drafters, all other	58,020	16,800	None	None
Electrical and electronics engineering technicians	56,040	31,800	None	None
Radiologic technologists and technicians	54,340	95,100	None	None
Funeral service managers, directors, morticians, and undertakers	54,330	10,700	None	Apprenticeship
Respiratory therapists	54,280	52,700	None	None
Geological and petroleum technicians	54,020	7,000	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Electrical and electronics drafters	53,020	7,200	None	None
Occupational therapy assistants	51,010	16,800	None	None
Precision instrument and equipment repairers, all other	50,910	5,500	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Mechanical engineering technicians	50,110	10,400	None	None

<sup>1</sup>May 2010 median annual wage for all occupations: \$33,840. Wage data are for wage and salary workers only.

<sup>2</sup>Denotes work experience in a related occupation.

Source: BLS Employment Projections program (projected job openings, education and training data), Occupational Employment Statistics program (wage data).

*(Continued from page 27)*

Almost all of them work for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Median annual wages of air traffic controllers are the highest of any occupation in which workers typically do not need a bachelor's degree. However, entry requirements are strict. And although a bachelor's degree is not always required, many workers in this occupation have one.

To enter the occupation, most workers need an associate's or bachelor's degree in air traffic control or a related subject from a program approved by the FAA's Air Traffic-Collegiate Training Initiative. Air traffic controllers also must meet other criteria. For example, they generally must be age 30 or younger, pass a pre-employment test, and get medical and security clearances.

After they are hired, workers get up to 12 weeks of training at the FAA Academy, followed by additional on-the-job training.

Work as an air traffic controller requires focus and is often stressful. Night and weekend shift work may be required, as many control towers and centers are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Most air traffic controllers are members of a union.

#### ***General and operations managers.***

Coordinating an organization's daily activities, these managers might develop policies, oversee budget activities, or review sales reports. They are employed in a wide range of industries, including manufacturing; retail trade; professional, scientific, and technical services; and wholesale trade. Others work in finance and insurance, healthcare and social assistance, government, and administrative and support services.

Because of the variety of industries in which they work, general and operations managers' education requirements also vary. Some workers need no more education than a high school diploma. But others need an associate's degree. Still others need a bachelor's or higher degree.

Most general and operations managers work their way up from lower-level positions,

such as sales manager or production manager. Often, this experience is with the same employer or in the same industry.

Jobs for general and operations managers are stressful because these workers are responsible for many aspects of their organization, including its overall success. About 38 percent of workers spent 50 hours or more a week on the job in 2010.

***Construction managers.*** These workers oversee a construction project from start to finish. They set timelines, prepare contracts, and manage budgets. They also determine which construction methods to use, and they hire and supervise workers to complete the project. Throughout the process, they ensure compliance with building and safety codes or other regulations. Construction managers may have job titles such as project manager, construction foreman, and job superintendent.

About 64 percent of construction managers were self-employed in 2010. Others worked for residential and nonresidential



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*Construction managers ensure compliance with building codes and other regulations.*

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construction companies and specialty trade contractors.

Education requirements for these workers vary. Some construction managers need an associate's degree in construction management or construction technology. Others might need a high school diploma, bachelor's degree, or master's degree. Most also have experience in a construction-related field, such as having worked as a carpenter, construction supervisor, or cost estimator.

Construction managers often perform under pressure and must be able to manage multiple activities at the same time. Like many managers, these workers spend long hours on the job. In 2010, about 25 percent of construction managers worked 50 hours or more a week.

**Radiation therapists.** When administering prescribed doses of radiation to patients, radiation therapists check equipment, observe patients' reactions to treatment, and document the session. Radiation is dangerous, so these workers follow safety procedures to protect themselves, their patients, and others.

Most radiation therapists work in hospitals. Others work in physicians' offices, other healthcare facilities, or schools that teach radiation therapy.

To become a radiation therapist, workers typically need an associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or certificate in radiation therapy. In many states, workers also must be licensed. Certification by the American Registry of

Radiologic Technologists is required in some states and by some employers.

**Nuclear medicine technologists.** These workers administer radioactive drugs to patients and then use special equipment to observe the behavior of these drugs. Their work helps other healthcare specialists diagnose and treat various diseases, such as cancer. To lower the risks of radiation exposure, workers must follow safety standards.

Most nuclear medicine technologists work in hospitals. Others work in physicians' offices, diagnostic and medical laboratories, other healthcare facilities, or schools.

These workers typically need an associate's degree in nuclear medicine technology, although some earn a bachelor's degree or other award. States might require workers to be licensed. And certification by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists or by the Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board may also be required in some states.

### Postsecondary non-degree award

Formal education after high school doesn't always involve earning a degree. For some occupations, workers typically need postsecondary education that leads to a certificate or other award but that does not lead to a degree. The length of these postsecondary non-degree programs varies from a few weeks to 2 years. Eleven occupations that typically require a postsecondary non-degree award for entry had

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*Some high-paying jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree involve stress or danger.*

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**Table 2: Occupations typically requiring a postsecondary non-degree award**

Occupation	Median annual wage, May 2010 <sup>1</sup>	Projected job openings, 2010-20	Work experience <sup>2</sup>	On-the-job training
First-line supervisors of fire fighting and prevention workers	\$68,240	33,100	1 to 5 years	None
Commercial pilots	67,500	19,300	None	None
Electrical and electronics repairers, powerhouse, substation, and relay	65,230	6,900	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Insurance appraisers, auto damage	56,230	2,700	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Telecommunications equipment installers and repairers, except line installers	54,710	59,300	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Aircraft mechanics and service technicians	53,420	45,200	None	None
Signal and track switch repairers	53,230	1,300	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	53,090	87,900	1 to 5 years	None
Avionics technicians	52,320	5,800	None	None
Electrical and electronics repairers, commercial and industrial equipment	51,820	17,700	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Commercial divers	51,360	1,300	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training

<sup>1</sup>May 2010 median annual wage for all occupations: \$33,840. Wage data are for wage and salary workers only.

<sup>2</sup>Denotes work experience in a related occupation.

Source: BLS Employment Projections program (projected job openings, education and training data), Occupational Employment Statistics program (wage data).

median annual wages greater than \$50,000 in May 2010. (See table 2.) Some of them are related to installation and repair work. Others involve aircraft or avionics.

To qualify for most of these occupations, workers need moderate- or long-term on-the-job training or work experience in a related occupation in addition to a postsecondary non-degree award.

***First-line supervisors of fire fighting and prevention workers.*** These supervisors oversee the activities of firefighters and related workers. They may have job titles such as fire chief, fire lieutenant, fire marshal, shift com-

mander, crew boss, and county forest ranger. Most are employed by local governments.

First-line supervisors typically must have worked as a firefighter or in a similar job for at least 1 to 5 years. Workers usually need to have earned an emergency medical technician or paramedic certificate.

Many states require first-line supervisors to complete certification programs, which are frequently offered by local fire academies. The New York City Fire Academy, for example, requires first-line supervisors to complete its 4-week training program. Similarly, the National Fire Academy has an executive fire



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*Commercial pilots fly helicopters or aircraft on unscheduled routes.*

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officer certification for workers who have an associate's degree.

Jobs for supervisors of fire fighting and prevention workers involve both stress and danger. Injury rates for fire fighting workers are higher than those for workers in other occupations. Hours and schedules vary—and may involve around-the-clock work.

**Commercial pilots.** These pilots fly and navigate helicopters or aircraft on unscheduled routes. Their jobs are different from those of airline pilots, who fly on scheduled routes, usually for major air carriers. Commercial pilots may fly helicopters or planes that monitor traffic, spray pesticides on crops, or transport people to hospitals. Some fly private jets. Others are flight instructors.

About 9 percent of commercial pilots were self-employed in 2010. Others worked in nonscheduled air transportation, technical and trade schools, scenic and sightseeing transportation, and ambulance services.

Like airline pilots, commercial pilots need a license. They prepare by completing a postsecondary non-degree award program at a military or civilian flight school or by taking lessons from an FAA-certified instructor.

Many commercial pilots have variable schedules. And commercial pilots face risks,

such as hearing loss due to noisy engines and pesticide exposure from crop dusting. Some commercial pilots are union members.

**Powerhouse, substation, and relay electrical and electronics repairers.** These workers maintain and fix equipment in electric power plants and in the substations and relay stations that bring electricity to consumers. A worker in this occupation may also be known as an instrument and control technician, relay technician, or substation mechanic. Most of them are employed by utility companies. Others work for local governments.

Workers receive long-term on-the-job training after they are employed. Formal apprenticeship programs—in which people work while learning the job tasks—are available for this occupation. And some workers earn an associate's degree.

Working with electricity is dangerous, and work-related injuries are common in this occupation.

**Auto damage insurance appraisers.** For insurance claim purposes, these workers inspect damaged motor vehicles and estimate repair costs. Most work for insurance carriers or insurance agencies and brokerages.

Workers typically complete a program in auto damage appraisal. Before they can

earn a certificate, appraisers might need auto repair or appraisal experience. For example, the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence has a program on damage analysis and estimating, but applicants must have 2 years of experience to qualify.

Some appraisers are licensed by the state in which they work. On-the-job training of less than 1 year also helps workers become competent in the occupation.

**Telecommunications equipment installers and repairers, except line installers.**

These workers install and fix Internet, telephone, cable television, and other telecommunications equipment. They explain to customers how the equipment works and repair or replace faulty devices. Some set up and maintain computerized switchboards or equipment in central offices or distribution centers of telecommunications companies. These workers may have job titles such as service technician, field technician, telecom technician, and PBX installer and repairer.

Most of these workers are employed by telecommunications firms. Others work for wiring installation contractors.

Telecommunications equipment installers and repairers typically need some education after high school, such as having completed a certificate program in electronics repair. Some workers take classes offered by equipment manufacturers. Industry certification is needed for certain jobs. And many workers receive on-the-job training, which can last from several weeks to a few months.

These workers have higher injury rates than workers in many other occupations. Taking precautions, such as using safety equipment, helps workers to avoid electrical shocks, burns, falls, and other risks. Some telecommunications equipment installers and repairers belong to a union.

**High school diploma**

A high school diploma can lead to a high-paying job in many fields, including those in management or public service. Supervisors or managers make up 11 of the highest paying occupations for which a high school diploma

is the most education typically required. (See table 3, beginning on page 34.) And 10 of the occupations involve law enforcement, fire fighting and prevention, or postal service work.

Forty-five occupations that usually require no more education than a high school diploma had median annual wages of greater than \$50,000 in May 2010. These occupations represent a diverse mix of careers, ranging from loan officers to elevator installers and repairers.

But you probably won't be prepared for a high-paying job with a diploma alone: all of the occupations in the table typically require work experience in a related occupation, on-the-job training, or both, before workers can enter or become fully competent in them.

**All other managers.** The top-paying occupation in the table includes a variety of job titles, such as security manager, supply chain manager, and wind energy project manager. These workers oversee a wide range of people, projects, or processes.

BLS data show that about 56 percent of these workers were self-employed in 2010. Many also worked for federal, state, and local

*(Continued on page 36)*



*High-paying high school level occupations typically require work experience in a related occupation, on-the-job training, or both.*

**Table 3: Occupations typically requiring a high school diploma**

Occupation	Median annual wage, May 2010 <sup>1</sup>	Projected job openings, 2010-20	Work experience <sup>2</sup>	On-the-job training
Managers, all other	\$96,450	249,400	1 to 5 years	None
Transportation, storage, and distribution managers	80,210	33,700	More than 5 years	None
First-line supervisors of police and detectives	78,260	38,700	1 to 5 years	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Administrative services managers	77,890	99,800	1 to 5 years	None
Nuclear power reactor operators	75,650	2,000	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Elevator installers and repairers	70,910	8,200	None	Apprenticeship
Power distributors and dispatchers	68,900	3,600	None	Long-term on-the-job training
First-line supervisors of non-retail sales workers	68,880	123,500	More than 5 years	None
Detectives and criminal investigators	68,820	30,100	1 to 5 years	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Fashion designers	64,530	6,700	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Power plant operators	63,080	14,400	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Business operations specialists, all other	62,450	327,200	Less than 1 year	Long-term on-the-job training
Media and communication equipment workers, all other	61,680	3,300	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural managers	60,750	234,500	More than 5 years	None
Postmasters and mail superintendents	60,300	4,800	1 to 5 years	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Petroleum pump system operators, refinery operators, and gaugers	60,040	14,400	None	Long-term on-the-job training
First-line supervisors of mechanics, installers, and repairers	59,150	164,900	1 to 5 years	None
Artists and related workers, all other	58,840	4,800	None	Long-term on-the-job training
First-line supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers	58,680	259,700	More than 5 years	None
Claims adjusters, examiners, and investigators	58,620	79,900	None	Long-term on-the-job training

**Table 3: Occupations typically requiring a high school diploma (continued)**

Occupation	Median annual wage, May 2010 <sup>1</sup>	Projected job openings, 2010-20	Work experience <sup>2</sup>	On-the-job training
Electrical power-line installers and repairers	\$58,030	52,700	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Gas plant operators	57,200	4,500	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Subway and streetcar operators	56,880	2,800	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Purchasing agents, except wholesale, retail, and farm products	56,580	91,200	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Loan officers	56,490	115,200	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
First-line supervisors of correctional officers	55,910	16,500	1 to 5 years	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Chemical plant and system operators	55,490	14,100	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Real estate brokers	54,910	29,700	1 to 5 years	None
Boilermakers	54,640	11,800	None	Apprenticeship
Transit and railroad police	54,330	1,100	None	Short-term on-the-job training
Buyers and purchasing agents, farm products	54,220	3,200	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Postal service mail carriers	53,860	103,400	None	Short-term on-the-job training
Police and sheriff's patrol officers	53,540	249,400	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Postal service clerks	53,100	15,500	None	Short-term on-the-job training
Postal service mail sorters, processors, and processing machine operators	53,080	7,500	None	Short-term on-the-job training
First-line supervisors of transportation and material-moving machine and vehicle operators	52,720	69,300	1 to 5 years	None
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products	52,440	559,900	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Construction and building inspectors	52,360	48,600	More than 5 years	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Fire inspectors and investigators	52,230	4,700	More than 5 years	Moderate-term on-the-job training

**Table 3: Occupations typically requiring a high school diploma (continued)**

Occupation	Median annual wage, May 2010 <sup>1</sup>	Projected job openings, 2010-20	Work experience <sup>2</sup>	On-the-job training
Stationary engineers and boiler operators	\$52,140	10,600	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Plant and system operators, all other	51,980	3,700	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Legal support workers, all other	51,800	9,600	None	Short-term on-the-job training
Property, real estate, and community association managers	51,480	82,300	1 to 5 years	None
Telecommunications line installers and repairers	50,850	51,400	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Sales representatives, services, all other	50,620	270,100	None	Short-term on-the-job training

<sup>1</sup>May 2010 median annual wage for all occupations: \$33,840. Wage data are for wage and salary workers only.

<sup>2</sup>Denotes work experience in a related occupation.

Source: BLS Employment Projections program (projected job openings, education and training data), Occupational Employment Statistics program (wage data).

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governments; management firms; colleges and universities; hospitals; and insurance carriers.

Work experience in a related occupation is often needed to enter this occupation. Schedules for these managers vary; about 26 percent of workers spent 50 hours or more a week on the job in 2010. But others worked part-time or variable schedules.

**Transportation, storage, and distribution managers.** These workers are in charge of operations that range from railroads to shipping facilities. They manage budgets, set policies and standards, and direct procurement.

Some of the industries that employ the largest number of these workers are federal, state, and local governments; general and specialized freight trucking; and warehousing and storage. Related industry experience—such as having been a supervisor at a transportation, storage, or distribution facility—is often required to qualify for one of these management positions.

Wages for these workers are high, but work hours may be long: about 20 percent of

workers put in 50 hours or more a week on the job in 2010.

**First-line supervisors of police and detectives.** These supervisors coordinate the investigation of criminal cases, train staff, and oversee other tasks related to police operations. They may have job titles such as chief of police, police captain, police shift commander, lieutenant, and detective sergeant.

Law enforcement experience and on-the-job training—such as attending a police academy to learn about related laws, use-of-force policies, and crowd-control techniques—are usually required to qualify for these positions.

Most first-line supervisors of police and detectives are employed by state and local governments.

**Administrative services managers.** Administrative services managers coordinate support services for an organization or department, such as facilities maintenance or records and information management. They oversee budgets, hire staff, buy supplies, and help maintain equipment.

These managers are employed in many different industries, including construction and healthcare. Most work their way up from related positions.

Administrative services managers may work long hours, with over 25 percent of workers putting in 50 hours or more per week in 2010.

**Nuclear power reactor operators.** These workers control nuclear reactors, check for problems, and monitor systems to ensure that nuclear power plants operate safely. They make adjustments as needed, following standard procedures. And they may handle nuclear fuel elements.

Jobs for nuclear power reactor operators involve risk. Because of this, they have very specific requirements, including licensure by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. To get a license, workers typically need at least 3 years of experience working in a power plant, followed by at least 1 year of training, after which they must pass a written exam and operating test. Many power reactor operators are members of a union.

## For more information

Explore many of the occupations highlighted in this article, along with hundreds of others, in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)* at [www.bls.gov/oooh](http://www.bls.gov/oooh). The *OOH* has detailed descriptions of education and training requirements and describes the nature of the work, wages, and other career information for 341 occupations.

To learn more about the BLS education and training data, visit [www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_education\\_training\\_system.htm](http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_education_training_system.htm). From this page, you can find an occupation's education and training assignments ([www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_table\\_112.htm](http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_112.htm)), check out the educational backgrounds of workers in an occupation ([www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_table\\_111.htm](http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_111.htm)), and more.

An April 2012 *Monthly Labor Review* article, "Employment Projections through the Lens of Education and Training," discusses the BLS occupational projections and education and training categories in greater detail. It is available at [www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2012/04/art2full.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2012/04/art2full.pdf).

Other U.S. Department of Labor resources also provide career information, including skill requirements, education and training providers, apprenticeships, and career services. For example, see the following sources:

- O\*NET, [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org), for detailed information about occupations
- My Next Move, [www.mynextmove.org](http://www.mynextmove.org), for career guidance, occupational information, job postings, and education and training providers
- Office of Apprenticeship, [www.doleta.gov/oa](http://www.doleta.gov/oa), for information about apprenticeship occupations
- Service Locator, [www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org), to find career services near you. ☰

