



CAREER PROFILE

Equipment Operator

JOB OUTLOOK^{2,3}

The job outlook for equipment operators is projected to grow at an average rate compared with all professions. In addition to opportunities in oil and gas, expected infrastructure repairs in the United States may increase demand for equipment operators in other industries as well.

Workers who are able to operate many types of equipment have an advantage over other candidates for equipment operator positions.

SALARY RANGE²

\$40,130 – \$54,180

WHO ARE THEY?²

Equipment operators have excellent hand-eye-foot coordination and mechanical skills for operating and performing maintenance on heavy and specialized equipment and vehicles. They are able to operate complex controls and handle large machinery in tight spaces. They have strength and stamina for working long hours and handling heavy objects. They are alert and conscientious individuals who are willing and able to closely follow safety rules and regulations. Equipment operators spend most of their time working outdoors often in unpleasant weather, in remote locations, and during irregular hours. They often get dirty and risk injury from falls and transportation accidents.

WHAT DO THEY DO?^{1,2,3}

Equipment operators run a variety of vehicles and machines at oil and gas production sites and facilities, as well as other types of construction and work sites. This equipment includes common machines, such as bulldozers, backhoes, and excavators, which help build well pads and pipelines. They also use more specialized machines, such as semi-trucks, forklifts, pump trucks, and cranes for moving large items and supplies around production sites. In addition to running machines and driving vehicles, equipment operators conduct machine inspections, make repairs, and clean the equipment they operate. They collaborate with others to help determine which machines are needed to complete upcoming tasks. They closely follow safety guidelines and regulations for operating equipment and maintain accurate maintenance and repair records.



Equipment Operator (Continued)

EDUCATION/ TRAINING

- High school diploma or equivalent, often from a vocational school.
- Vocational training, mathematics, and automotive mechanics courses are helpful.
- Some operators complete simulator training for the machines they are trained to operate.

HOW DO I BECOME ONE?^{1,2}

Many equipment operators learn to operate equipment on the job after they receive their high school diploma or equivalency. They may participate in an apprenticeship program. They often are required to obtain a commercial driver's license for hauling equipment to and from job sites. Some states require a special operator's license for specific equipment, such as backhoes, loaders, and bulldozers.

Equipment operators also need the ability and willingness to work at heights; strong hand-eye-foot coordination for controlling machinery in often-small spaces; mechanical skills for performing maintenance and repairs; and physical strength and stamina.

¹ "Equipment Operator." Video from the American Petroleum Institute.

² "Material Moving Machine Operator." Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

³ "Construction Equipment Operators." Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/construction-and-extraction/construction-equipment-operators.htm#tab-4>.