

What's this job all about?

Mining is the process of digging into the earth to extract natural minerals. Miners in mechanized mines operate machinery that extracts various minerals, coal, sand, gravel, building stone, fertilizers and other materials that are needed for hundreds of uses. For example, coal for energy, copper for wiring, and gold for jewelry and electronic components. Many other minerals are used to make medicines and household products. Miners extract metallic minerals such as copper, gold, iron, lead, silver, and zinc. Metal produced by miners is found in virtually every product you use or buy. Nonmetallic minerals such as stone, sand, gravel, and clay are also mined.

Alaska is the world's largest producer of zinc, a major producer of gold, silver, lead, tin, and coal. Alaska also produces sand and gravel used for construction and in concrete. There are two types of mining: surface mining and underground mining. The type of mine depends on how deep the minerals are under the earth's surface. Alaska has several underground mines and numerous surface operations. Alaska's history is tied closely to its mining heritage. In the early 1900's, the Alaska-Juneau, the Independence and other mines, and of course the Alaska Gold Rush, brought early settlers who worked and helped develop the state's resources. Today, mining continues to be a vital industry.

Here's what Miners do:

- Use carefully controlled explosives to loosen rock from the ore body.
- Operate loaders and excavators to move the broken rock and load it into haul trucks.
- Operate large off-road haul trucks to transport broken rock to the mill or stockpile.
- Operate various machinery to reclaim previously mined areas and return them to a productive state.
- Plan for and carry out mining operations that strictly follow permitted activities.
- Operate machinery that crushes and grinds mineral bearing rock to extract the valuable metals from the waste.
- Strictly follow worker safety, health, and environmental laws and regulations.
- Maintain mining machinery to ensure a safe and productive operation.

How much money can I make?

Median Wage: \$18.80 per hour.

Wages vary by area of the country and employer and by the type of mining operation. A 2006 survey by the Alaska Miners' Association showed \$72,000 as the average annual wage for Alaska miners. Many miners make much more when they gain experience and gain mining skills. Many mines in Alaska are camp jobs and miners work various shifts with a typical schedule being two weeks on and two weeks off. Most major mines generally offer full time workers benefits such as sick leave, paid vacations, health insurance, profit sharing, and retirement plans.

HELPFUL HIGH SCHOOL COURSES

A high school degree is almost always required to work as a miner. You should take courses in high school that prepare you to earn a high school diploma. Below is a list of high school courses that will help prepare you for a job as a miner. You don't have to take all of them, but you should consider them in planning for high school. Some of these courses are also available at colleges and technical schools.

Construction Trades

- Exploration of Construction Careers
- Construction
- Construction Trades Work Experience

English Language and Literature

- Reading

Health and Safety Education

- Safety and First Aid

Industrial and Technology Education

- Exploration of Careers
- General Industrial Arts
- Industrial Safety and First Aid
- Equipment Maintenance and Repair
- Industrial and Technology Education Work Experience

Life and Physical Sciences

- Earth Science
- Geology
- Physical Science

Mathematics

- Integrated Math
- General Math
- Applied Math
- Pre-Algebra
- Algebra

Physical Education

- Physical Education
- Fitness and Conditioning Activities

How long does it take to receive training?

To work as a miner, you must have a high school diploma or GED, be at least 18 years old, be in good physical condition, and be free of drugs and alcohol. A background check may be required if the miner will have access to explosives on the job.

The federal regulations under MSHA (Mine Safety and Health Administration) require a minimum of 24 hours mandatory health and mine safety training for surface miners and 40 hours for underground miners. This training must take place prior to being assigned tasks at a mine. In addition, the miner must receive "task training" for any new task they are assigned.

Some people train to be miners by taking formal training. Some professional technical and two-year schools offer mine technology courses. Usually, the minimum time to become entry-level task trained is one month, while specialized cases such as underground or hard rock may require up to six weeks. Most miners also receive training on the job from an experienced worker. Training includes operations and maintenance of mining machines, mine safety, and first aid. Appropriate training usually takes four to six months to complete.

When I'm ready to work, will there be job openings?

According to Alaska industry representatives, there is indication of higher than average growth for miners and mining machine operators through 2014. Many openings are expected to result from replacing those who retire or otherwise permanently leave the occupation.

Please see the Training Programs section of this booklet to find out more about training in these career fields in Alaska.



What's this job all about?

Are you someone who just has to stop and look at the big trucks on the road? You just might be interested in being a heavy equipment mechanic. These are the folks that maintain and fix the machines used in construction, logging and other industrial work. They are a big part of making sure construction jobs stay on time and on track.

When most people think of Alaska they think "big" and this is one job with potentially big opportunities. The gas and oil industry throughout the state, as well as the construction, transportation and mining industries statewide, have big machines with big engines that need knowledgeable mechanics to fix them. And if a gas pipeline is built in our state, there will be even more need for people who know how to keep the big machines moving.

Here's what Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics do:

- Maintain equipment so it operates safely.
- When equipment breaks down, examine it for defects.
- Use hand-held computers to diagnose parts that need repair and fix them.
- Use jacks or hoists to lift and move large parts.
- Check parts for damage using gauges and meters.
- Clean parts by spraying them with or soaking them in solvent.
- Grease and oil parts that need it.
- Repair or replace damaged or worn parts.
- Use welding equipment to fix broken frames or parts.
- Reassemble equipment and test it for performance and safety.
- Heavy equipment mechanics in large repair shops perform more complex repairs. They may rebuild engines, fix electrical problems, or repair hydraulic pumps.
- Able to independently troubleshoot problems, able to work in remote locations, and ability to work independently.

How much money can I make?

Median Wage: \$26.14 per hour.

In Alaska, the median wage for heavy equipment mechanics is about \$4,531 per month. This amount varies slightly by region. Wages and benefits vary by employer. Full-time mechanics may receive benefits such as sick leave, vacation pay, and health insurance.

How long does it take to receive training?

Depending on your ability and focus, becoming certified as a journeyman mobile heavy equipment mechanic takes about three to five years as an apprentice to earn the required total of 6000 hours of on-the-job training and nine to eleven weeks of classroom instruction per year. If you go through a technical school or a university program, getting training varies.

HELPFUL HIGH SCHOOL COURSES

Below is a list of high school courses that will help prepare you for this occupation. While you do not have to take all of them, you should consider them in course planning. Some of these courses are also available at colleges and technical schools.

Construction Trades

Electronics

Energy, Power, and Transportation Technologies

Introduction to Mechanics

Advanced Auto Mechanics

Automotive Service

Diesel Mechanics and Repair

Health and Safety Education

Safety and First Aid

Drivers' Education

Industrial and Technology Education

Exploration of Careers

General Industrial Arts

Industrial Safety and First Aid

Equipment Maintenance and Repair

Industrial and Technology Education Work Experience

Mathematics

General Math

Applied Math

When I'm ready to work, will there be job openings?

The outlook for job openings for heavy equipment mechanics is above average to 2014. Average growth is projected. Besides the openings that occur from people in this field retiring, even more openings will occur if a gasline is built. Demand for heavy equipment mechanics follows growth in the economy and Alaska's economy is expected to continue to grow.

Please see the Training Programs section of this booklet to find out more about training in these career fields in Alaska.



What's this job all about?

Operating engineers and construction equipment operators use machinery to move construction materials. Generally machines are used to move objects short distances, such as around a factory or construction site. They use equipment to smooth or grade the ground. They may also dump, remove, or spread rock and earth. Operating engineers and construction equipment operators are unique because they know how to operate several different types of equipment, such as cranes, bulldozers, and hoists.

Bulldozer operators run tractors equipped with attachments, such as blades and cable winches. They dig out dirt, trees, and rocks in order to level the ground. Crane and tower operators lift and move materials using booms and cables supported by towers. They watch for hand signals or listen to radioed instructions from other workers. Hoist and winch operators lift and pull loads with their equipment. If you are interested in working in this field in Alaska, you'll need to be prepared to work outside in sometimes difficult conditions. Along with our weather challenges in Alaska, operating engineers often work in physical locations that provide challenges – like in Alaska's dense forests and steep terrain. This is one job that you'll never find boring!

Here's what Operating Engineers do:

- Operate many types of equipment in a variety of different applications.
- Operate equipment efficiently and expediently at the same time.
- Set up and inspect equipment.
- Attach hoses, belts, and other equipment to tractors.
- Make adjustments to blades, buckets, and booms.
- Use stakes and guidelines on the ground to help them line up their equipment.
- Do maintenance and make minor repairs on their machines.
- Clean and service their equipment.
- Keep records of the materials they moved.
- Do some manual loading and unloading.
- Operate valves on air compressors or pumps at construction sites.

How much money can I make?

Median Wage: \$25.85 per hour.

In Alaska, the median wage for operating engineers and construction equipment operators is \$4,481 per month (\$25.85 per hour). Half of all of these workers earn between \$3,799 and \$5,271 per month (\$21.92 and \$30.41 per hour). Nationally, the median wage for operating engineers and construction equipment operators is \$2,987 per month (\$17.23 per hour). Half of all operating engineers and construction equipment operators earn between \$2,330 and \$3,994 per month (\$13.44 and \$23.04 per hour). Wages vary according to the type of machinery being operated. Crane and tower operators generally earn the highest wages. In general, union workers receive higher wages. Union operating engineers and construction equipment operators and those working for government agencies generally receive health insurance and a retirement plan.

How long does it take to receive training?

To work as an operating engineer, you must have a high school diploma or GED, complete on-the-job training, be in good physical condition; and have a good ability to judge distance.



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For Colleen Charlie, all of the sacrifices that have to be made to become an Operating Engineer are more than worth it. Colleen grew up in Minto, Alaska, a village of 258 residents located northwest of Fairbanks. After graduation from Minto High School, Colleen took a job as an admissions clerk at the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center in Fairbanks. Seeing her boyfriend, Ryan, participate in an Operating Engineers apprenticeship program inspired her to take advantage of an opportunity to take part in a training program funded by the Department of Labor & Workforce Development at the Palmer Training Center. Colleen and Ryan's son Noah was two months old when she had the chance to change her career path. "I saw how much money Ryan was making as an Operating Engineer and I thought 'I could do that job,'" Colleen said. "So I quit my job and went down to Palmer to take advantage of the opportunity to learn."

Colleen's path to become an Operating Engineer was a slow process. After completing her classes in Palmer she took part in another Department of Labor funded program at the Center for Employment Education and was able to get her CDL. While there, she also took a Hazardous Materials class and then went on to participate in an Alaska Works Partnership's apprenticeship preparation program. "All of the classes I took really helped me to build up my resume and be competitive when I applied to be an apprentice myself,"

Colleen said. Now, as an Operating Engineer apprentice, Colleen continues to make sacrifices to get where she wants to be. "As an apprentice when they say 'jump' I ask 'How high?'" she said. "One of the sacrifices for me as a mother of two children is that as an apprentice you can't turn down jobs. I have a three-month-old daughter and had to leave her to take a job away from home when she was a month old."

Colleen went to work on the Dalton Highway, where she was assigned to drive one of the big rollers. "Sometimes I get to drive the dozers and loaders," she said. But Colleen stated that she knows the sacrifices she makes occasionally working away from home are to make life better for herself and for her children. "I have healthcare, medical, dental and vision benefits and a great retirement plan," she said. "In one week I make more money than I made in a month at my old job. And I get time and a half for working on the weekends," she said. Colleen's advice for anyone wanting to get behind the wheel of the really big rigs is this: "If you have the drive and the motivation, go for it!" While Colleen acknowledged that it was hard to leave her village, and hard to make the adjustments to her new life, she said it has been totally worth it. "You know it's worth it when you get your first paycheck," she said.



Operating Engineer, Construction Equipment Operator

Some operating engineers learn their skills through apprenticeship training programs. To apply for an apprenticeship, you must be at least 18 years old. Apprenticeship programs usually consist of three to five years of on-the-job training and at least 144 hours of classroom training each year. Professional technical schools also offer programs in heavy equipment operation. Operating engineers learn their skills through a union apprenticeship or on-the-job training. The International Union of Operating Engineers sponsors three-year apprenticeships. Competition is strong for entry into apprenticeship programs because job openings are limited and pay is good. Private vocational schools also offer training in operating certain types of construction equipment. Many operating engineers learn their skills informally on the job. In this case, you learn from an experienced worker. The military is also a good source of training. If you receive this type of training in the military, you may earn credit for previous work experience when you enter a civilian apprenticeship program.

When I'm ready to work, will there be job openings?

In Alaska, the outlook for job openings for operating engineers is excellent to 2014. Average growth is projected. Nationally, the number of jobs for operating engineers and construction equipment operators is expected to grow about as fast as average through the year 2014. The outlook for this occupation varies with the state of the economy. When the economy is growing, the government spends more on roads, highways, and bridges, creating new jobs. When the economy is slow the government usually does only basic maintenance of roads and bridges. Alaska's potential for a natural gas pipeline means that there will be a growing economy and need for operating engineers.

Please see the Training Programs section of this booklet to find out more about training in these career fields in Alaska.

HELPFUL HIGH SCHOOL COURSES

A high school degree is almost always required to work as an operating engineer. You should take courses in high school that prepare you to earn a high school diploma. Below is a list of high school courses that will help prepare you. While you do not have to take all of them, you should consider them in planning for high school. Some of these courses are also available at colleges and technical schools.

Business

Introduction to Business

Computer and Information Sciences

General Computer Applications

Construction Trades

Exploration of Construction Careers/Construction
Construction Trades Work Experience

Drafting

Drafting/Blueprint Reading

Energy, Power, and Transportation Technologies

Introduction to Mechanics
Diesel Mechanics and Repair
Energy and Power

English Language and Literature

Business and Applied English

Health and Safety Education

Health and Fitness/Safety and First Aid
Drivers' Education

Industrial and Technology Education

Equipment Maintenance and Repair

Mathematics

General Math/Applied Math
Algebra/Geometry
Trigonometry/Business Math

Physical Education

Physical Education
Fitness and Conditioning Activities
Lifetime Fitness Education

Precision Metalwork

Sheet Metal/Welding



What's this job all about?

Plumbers and pipefitters install and repair pipe systems that carry water, steam, air, or other fluids or gases. Our modern system of plumbing - based on the technology of ancient Romans - removes waste and treats water. At the same time, it removes the chance for diseases to spread. Calling the plumber to fix a leaking pipe isn't just about fixing a nuisance. It's also helping maintain public health and it's helping to make sure the structure of buildings remains strong and intact.

Plumbers and pipefitters are considered a single trade. However, workers usually specialize in one area. Plumbers install and repair water, waste, and gas systems in homes and commercial buildings. Pipefitters install and repair pipe systems used in manufacturing. They also work on pipe systems that generate electricity and heat and cool buildings. Some pipefitters specialize in one type of system. For example, they may specialize in hospital work, where they install oxygen and gas. Steamfitters install pipe systems that move liquids or gases under high pressure. Plumbers and pipefitters in Alaska coordinate their work in a wide variety of industries, from new construction, to remodeling, to the oil and gas industry. There will be an increased need for members of this trade during the construction of a natural gas pipeline in Alaska.

Here's what Plumbers and Pipefitters do:

- Study blueprints, drawings, and building codes.
- Inspect buildings to determine what materials to use.
- Select pipe sizes and types and other materials.
- Fit piping into the building with the least amount of waste; measure and mark areas where pipes will be installed.
- Cut holes in walls, ceilings, or floors where the pipes will go.
- Hang steel supports from ceiling joists for large systems.
- Cut and bend the lengths of pipe, using saws, pipe cutters, and pipe-bending machines.
- Install the pipe, fixtures, and appliances.
- Connect the system to water, gas, or sewer lines.
- Check the system with pressure gauges to be sure it is free from leaks and operates properly.
- Repair and maintain plumbing, replace defective fittings and broken pipes.
- Modify existing pipes and maintain related equipment.
- Operate pump equipment to remove water from flooded areas, such as basements or manholes.
- Direct other workers in cutting, assembling, and installing pipe systems.
- Provide cost quotes to customers, negotiate contracts.

How much money can I make?

Median Wage: \$27.58.

This occupation is included in the larger group of "pipelaying fitters, pipefitters, and plumbers." The median wage for this group is \$4,781 per month (\$27.58 per hour). Half of all of these workers earn between \$3,602 and \$5,651 per month (\$20.78 and \$32.60 per hour). Nationally, the median wage for plumbers and pipefitters is \$3,513 per month (\$20.27 per hour). Apprentices usually begin at about half the wage rate paid to experienced plumbers and pipefitters. Wages increase regularly as their skills improve. Full-time salaried plumbers may earn benefits such as vacation, sick leave, and health insurance. After an initial waiting period, apprentices receive the same benefits as experienced plumbers and pipefitters. Self-employed plumbers and pipefitters must provide their own insurance.



D U N C A N

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The first place Rachael Duncan lived after graduating from Alyeska Central School and moving out of her parent's house was a cabin without running water near Salcha, Alaska. "I lived there with a roommate for two years," she said, "so it's no wonder I have a real appreciation for what plumbers and pipefitters actually do." Rachael was working for minimum wage as a cook and a waitress when her mother told her about an ad she saw in the newspaper for an Alaska Works Partnership class for plumbers and pipefitters.

"I like doing construction work and had done some remodeling," Rachael said, "so I decided to try to sign up." At the same time, Rachael was hearing about the possibility of a gas pipeline getting built in Alaska in the local news reports. "I realized a gasline would need a lot of pipefitters. When a pipeline gets built in Alaska there could be another big boom with many job opportunities," she said. Rachael loved the class and managed to get a job as a welder's helper. She then decided to apply for an apprenticeship program in the plumbing trade and the rest is history. Now she's working alongside a journeyman plumber every day on a large building project in Fairbanks. "I just got done helping my journeyman plumb all the unit heaters and air handlers in a large commercial building," she said, "and now we're working to get all the sinks and toilets installed." Rachael is one of only three

women on her job site. "None of the men give us a hard time," she said. "Once they get to know you they start being themselves around you."

"I'd really like to see more young women go into the construction field," she said. "It doesn't matter what kind of trade you do, my advice is that it's really worth it." The hardest part of the transition to her new job, she said, was the math. "My advice to anyone interested in this trade is to really focus on math while you're in school. Everyone always struggles with the math. I was lucky that in the class I took, I got a refresher course that helped me. Now I use the math every day to figure out take-offs in a pipe or to help find elevations and it's a much more natural thing." Other advice Rachel gives to young people interested in the trades is to stay away from drugs. "They do random drug tests on the job site in all the trades and if you fail, you lose your job. I always tell young people that it's not worth it to throw away a good paying career and an excellent opportunity by using drugs," she said.

Rachael said her life has done nothing but get better since she started her apprenticeship. "I'm making close to \$600 more a week than I made as a waitress," she said. "Now I have a car and my roommate and I are renting a really nice three bedroom apartment – with plumbing!"



Plumbers and Pipefitters

How long does it take to receive training?

To work as a plumber or pipefitter, you must have a high school diploma or GED, complete classroom coursework, complete on-the-job training, have a license to work as a contractor, pass a state or local licensing exam, and have good communication skills. Nearly all plumbers and pipefitters learn their skills through union apprenticeship training programs.

Apprenticeship programs usually consist of three to five years of on-the-job training. Each year you receive at least 144 hours of classroom training. Prepare for an apprenticeship by taking courses at a professional technical school or two-year college. The military is an excellent source of training. The military trains people to install and repair plumbing and pipe systems on aircraft, missiles, and ships. If you receive training in the military, you may earn credit for previous work experience when you enter a civilian apprenticeship program.

When I'm ready to work, will there be job openings?

The outlook for job openings for plumbers and pipefitters in Alaska is good to 2014, with average growth projected. Most openings are expected to result from replacement needs; replacing those who retire or otherwise permanently leave the occupation. Nationally, the number of jobs for plumbers and pipefitters is expected to increase about as fast as average through the year 2014. The demand for plumbers and pipefitters is expected to outpace the supply of workers trained in this field. In addition, several thousand jobs will occur each year as workers retire or leave the occupation so job opportunities will be good. However, job openings and apprenticeships vary with local conditions. New construction is expected to grow slowly through the year 2014. Much of the work for plumbers will stem from the repair and maintenance of residential, commercial, and industrial pipe systems. Jobs for plumbers and pipefitters are usually less affected by the economy than other construction trades. This is because plumbing repairs often cannot be put off.

Please see the Training Programs section of this booklet to find out more about training in these career fields in Alaska.

HELPFUL HIGH SCHOOL COURSES

A high school degree is almost always required to work as a plumber or pipefitter. You should take courses in high school that prepare you to earn a high school diploma. Here is a list of high school courses that will help prepare you. Some of these courses are also available at the technical or college level.

Business

Introduction to Business

Construction Trades

Exploration of Construction Careers

Plumbing

Construction Trades Work Experience

Drafting

Drafting

Blueprint Reading

Industrial and Technology Education

Exploration of Careers

General Industrial Arts

Materials and Processes

Industrial Safety and First Aid

Equipment Maintenance and Repair

Industrial and Technology Education Work Experience

Life and Physical Sciences

Chemistry

Physics

Mathematics

Integrated Math

General Math, Applied Math

Pre-Algebra, Algebra

Business Math

Precision Metalwork

Welding





Process Operators

Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators and Gaugers, Gas and Oil Plant Operators

What's this job all about?

Gas and oil plant operators – also called “process operators” – control the refining process for crude oil or natural gas.

Alaska is blessed with lots of oil and gas resources. These natural resources are a big part of Alaska's economy and the oil industry provides many job opportunities throughout the state. In its natural form, however, oil (usually called "crude oil") is not very useful. However, because of oil's chemical makeup, it can be easily changed, and the different results become a wide variety of finished products.

To make these oil-based products, the oil has to be refined. Gas and oil plant operators work at refineries. These are factories where crude oil and natural gas are transformed into other products. At refineries, oil and gas go through processing to get the final products.

There are many types of gas and oil plant operators. Gas distribution operators work for companies such as power plants and steel mills. They manage the gas or oil flow to fuel the furnaces or boilers. Petroleum pump system operators control the movement of products from processing to holding tanks. Gaugers test and control oil and gas flows at wells, tank farms, and refineries.

Here's what Process Operators do:

- Monitor all steps of the refining process.
- Make sure the proper temperatures are maintained and the right ingredients are mixed together.
- Take samples to inspect the quality of what is being produced.
- Use gauges or meters to check the color and quality of the product.
- Keep logs of meter readings, test results, and adjustments they make.
- Inspect equipment for safety problems, leaks, or wear.
- Look for problems that may require stopping production to make repairs.
- Check flow meters and panel lights for correct information.
- Discuss repairs with maintenance staff or perform their own repairs.
- Shut down machines in an emergency.

How much money can I make?

Median wage: \$24.96 per hour.

Wage information for petroleum pump system operators in Alaska is not available. Nationally, the median wage for gas plant operators is \$4,326 per month (\$24.96 per hour). Half of all gas plant operators earn between \$3,742 and \$5,016 per month (\$21.59 and \$28.94 per hour). Wages are similar for oil plant operators. Wages vary by the operator's level of experience and training. Union workers tend to be paid more than non-union workers. Many employers offer benefits such as health, dental and retirement plans, vacations and sick leave. Some major oil companies offer cash bonuses and profit-sharing plans.

How long does it take to receive training?

To work as a process operator, you must have a high school diploma or GED; and complete on-the-job training. Some gas and oil plant operators earn a certificate. A few professional technical schools and two-year colleges offer programs related to this field. Larger companies have their own training programs. Smaller companies usually send new employees to training workshops.

HELPFUL HIGH SCHOOL COURSES

A high school degree is almost always required to work as a process operator. You need courses in English, math, science, and social studies, physical education, health, and applied art or second language. Here is a list of high school courses that will help prepare you:

Computer and Information Sciences

General Computer Applications

English Language and Literature

English and Language Arts (Four years)

Industrial and Technology Education

Exploration of Careers

Materials and Processes

Industrial Safety and First Aid

Technology Systems, Emerging Technologies

Equipment Maintenance and Repair

Industrial and Technology Education Work Experience

Life and Physical Sciences

Physical Science

Chemistry and Advanced Chemistry

Physics

Mathematics

General Math

Pre-Algebra, Algebra

Geometry

Trigonometry

Calculus

Many gas and oil plant operators learn their skills on the job from experienced workers. Professional organizations, businesses, universities, and community colleges all offer training workshops. On-the-job training includes classroom and hands-on work experience. Your training may also include computer simulated plant operations. After training, another worker supervises your work for a period of time. Training may last up to 12 months.

When I'm ready to work, will there be job openings?

According to Alaska industry representatives there is indication for a higher than average growth for process operators through 2014. This is a high growth field not only because of retirees in the oil companies, but because it will be needed with the building of a gasline project.

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