



Driller

(Also called Exploration Driller, Construction and Well Driller, Gas and Oil Driller)

What's this job all about?

Drillers use equipment to drill holes in the earth to take samples or to insert pipes. Gas and oil drillers operate the equipment used to drill for gas and oil and minerals. Construction and well drillers may drive trucks with equipment to drilling sites. Exploration drillers work in the mining industry and drill for precious metals. In Alaska, drilling sites are usually hard to reach, so equipment may be flown in by helicopter. Gas and oil and mineral drillers set up the drilling equipment at the area geologist and geophysist believe they will find gas or oil or precious minerals. They install a derrick, a tower-like steel structure that supports the drilling equipment, stabilize the drill rig with supports and they select the various tools that are needed for drilling. Both of these jobs use big equipment to get the job done.

Many drillers in Alaska have to travel to their work sites. They may work as part of a crew for 12-hour days for weeks and then have weeks off to go home or on vacation. For some drillers, this work schedule is part of what they like about their jobs. You should consider whether you might like that type of work schedule if considering this job.

Here's what Drillers do:

- Place a drill, level it, get it stabilized and make sure all the parts are attached.
- Check how deep to dig and make sure the drill is at the right angle.
- Control the speed of the equipment during drilling.
- Monitor the depth of the drill and make the drill longer when needed.
- During the drilling process workers may add lubricants or water into the well to cool off the diamond bit, as the bits are expensive.
- Monitor the process by watching and listening to the sound of the drill to know when the drill has reached a tough layer, and decide if any changes are needed.
- Deal with different soil surfaces and textures.
- Take samples and record the location and depth where they were taken.
- Make holes for power poles or create underground tunnels.
- Operate machinery, maintain and repair it.
- Work outside, often in extreme weather conditions.
- Travel to the worksite, sometimes even travel internationally.

How much money can I make?

Median Wage: Gas and oil drillers: \$31.05 per hour, Construction and well drillers: \$24.37 per hour.

Half of all construction and well drillers earn between \$3,753 and \$4,626 per month (\$21.65 and \$26.69 per hour). Nationally, the median wage for construction and well drillers is \$2,813 per month (\$16.23 per hour). In Alaska, the median wage for gas and oil drillers is \$5,382 per month. Half of all gas and oil drillers earn between \$3,397 and \$6,119 per month (\$19.60 and \$35.30 per hour). A good portion of what drillers can make comes from working overtime hours, so your income can be quite a bit higher than the median wage. Gas and oil drillers who work full time usually receive benefits like sick leave, paid vacation, and health insurance. Some employers also provide a retirement plan.

HELPFUL HIGH SCHOOL COURSES

A high school degree is almost always required to work in these fields. You should take courses in high school that prepare you to earn a high school diploma. Here are some of the classes that will help prepare you for this field: Some of these courses are also available at colleges and technical schools.

Construction Trades

Exploration of Construction Careers
Construction
Construction Trades Work Experience

Drafting

Drafting, Technical and Mechanical
Blueprint Reading

Energy, Power, and Transportation Technologies

Introduction to Mechanics

Health and Safety Education

Safety and First Aid

Industrial and Technology Education

Exploration of Careers

General Industrial Arts

Equipment Maintenance and Repair
Industrial Safety and First Aid
Industrial and Technology Education Work Experience

Life and Physical Sciences

Earth Science
Geology

Mathematics

Integrated Math
General Math
Pre-Algebra, Algebra

Physical Education

Physical Education
Fitness and Conditioning Activities

How long does it take to receive training?

To work as a driller you need a high school diploma or GED. You can prepare for these jobs by taking courses at a professional technical or two-year school. Courses in shop, general math, and drafting may be helpful. A few colleges offer programs in drilling. Most drillers learn skills informally on the job. You may start with little or no training and learn skills from an experienced worker over time. You do need to be physically fit, however. Many workers in Alaska also learn their skills through being employed by gas, oil and mining companies. These programs usually take two years to complete. In Alaska, oilfield operations are becoming more technical, so some employers are looking for a higher level of skill.

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 drillers through 2014. Most openings are expected to result from growth in the occupation and the possibility of a natural gas pipeline being built.

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

