

# What's this job all about?

If you like figuring out what's wrong with big engines and fixing them, working as a bus or truck mechanic or a diesel engine specialist may be the right job for you.

Did you know the average gas tank in a car holds about 15 gallons of fuel? The average city bus gas tank holds nearly 200 gallons. A bus can be as tall as two adults and as long as half the length of a football field. So it makes sense that keeping a bus or truck running takes more work than your average car. In addition to buses and trucks, these mechanics work on the diesel engines in heavy equipment such as bulldozers, cranes, or tractors.

In the construction, mining, and oil and gas industry in Alaska there are lots of big equipment with diesel engines. And there is a big need to maintain and repair bus and truck engines in Alaska's severe climate. If you like fixing things, this can be a great field for you to consider.

### Here's what Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists do:

- Maintain vehicles to help prevent future problems and avoid bigger problems later on.
- Examine and adjust vehicles' safety features; change oil, check batteries, adjust brakes, and grease parts. They also clean or replace parts, pistons, bearings, gears, and valves.
- Fix vehicles that aren't working.
- Use hand-held computers like motor analyzers, chassis charts, and pressure gauges to identify problems and take systems apart to fix them.
- Read job orders in order to learn what work should be done on vehicles.
- Listen to the sound of engines to identify problems.
- Follow the factory guidelines for upgrading parts or tuning engines.
- Install parts and look at how they fit within the engine.
- Check if there is enough space for parts to operate.
- Maintain and repair shop machinery like pumps and compressors.
- Troubleshoot problems independently.

### How much money can I make?

**Median wage: \$23.37 per hour.**

Half of all bus and truck mechanics earn between \$3,401 and \$4,689 per month (\$19.62 and \$27.05 per hour). Many bus and truck mechanics in Alaska are members of a union. Union members are usually paid more than non-union members. Most full-time bus and truck mechanics receive benefits like health insurance, sick leave, and paid vacation. Some employers also provide uniforms, money for tools, or pay for additional training.

### How long does it take to receive training?

Depending on your ability and focus, becoming certified as a journeyman bus and truck mechanic or diesel engine specialist takes about three to five years as an apprentice. You have to

## HELPFUL HIGH SCHOOL COURSES

Here are some of the high school courses that can help prepare you. While you don't have to take all of them, you should consider them in your planning. Some of these classes are also available at colleges and technical schools.

### **Business**

- Introduction to Business
- Computer and Information Sciences
  - Basic Computer
  - General Computer Applications
  - Computer Technology

### **Construction Trades**

- Electricity and Electronics

### **Electronics**

- Energy, Power, and Transportation Technologies
  - Introduction to Auto Repair
  - Introduction to Mechanics
  - Advanced Auto Mechanics
    - Automotive Service
    - Diesel Mechanics and Repair
  - Transportation Technology Work Experience

### **Health and Safety Education**

- Safety and First Aid
- Drivers' Education

### **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

### **Mathematics**

- Integrated Math
- General Math
- Applied Math
- Business Math

complete 6000 hours of on-the-job training and nine to eleven weeks of classroom instruction that are required per year. If you go through a technical school or university program, the amount of time it takes varies.

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

In Alaska, the outlook for job openings for bus and truck mechanics is above average in Alaska to 2014. If a gas pipeline is built in Alaska it is expected that there will be many more jobs open in these fields. Nationally, the number of jobs for bus and truck mechanics is expected to grow about as fast as average through the year 2014.

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

