

Construction Equipment Operators

SOC: 47-2070 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$58,320

Median Salary

539,500

Employment

+4.0%

Growth Rate

■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: High school diploma

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Medium Risk - 35.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.

This job has some routine elements but still requires human judgment and interaction.

■■ Work-Life Balance

5.1/10 - Fair work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	9.4/10	Investigative	5.8/10
Artistic	4.0/10	Social	5.0/10
Enterprising	5.0/10	Conventional	6.0/10

■ Top Skills Required

Ability to work at heights, Hand-eye-foot coordination, Mechanical skills, Physical stamina, Physical strength

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Construction Equipment Operators are skilled trades professionals who operate **heavy machinery used to build roads, buildings, bridges, and infrastructure**. Their work is essential to construction projects of all sizes, transforming raw land and materials into functional structures through precision, coordination, and strict safety practices. This role combines technical machine operation with situational awareness on active job sites.

This career is well suited for individuals who enjoy hands-on work, operating large equipment, and contributing directly to visible, real-world construction outcomes.

What Do Construction Equipment Operators Do?

Construction equipment operators control powerful machines to move earth, materials, and structures according to project plans.

Common responsibilities include:

- Operating equipment such as bulldozers, excavators, loaders, graders, and cranes
- Moving earth, gravel, concrete, and construction materials
- Reading grade stakes, site plans, or digital controls
- Coordinating movements with ground crews and supervisors
- Inspecting equipment before and after use
- Performing basic maintenance and reporting mechanical issues
- Following safety rules and site-specific procedures

Types of Construction Equipment Operators

Operators may specialize in specific machines or construction phases:

- Earthmoving Equipment Operators: Operate bulldozers, excavators, and loaders.
- Paving and Road Equipment Operators: Run asphalt pavers, rollers, and graders.
- Crane Operators: Lift and position heavy materials and structural components.
- Heavy Equipment Operators: Handle large, multi-function machines on major projects.
- Utility and Trenching Operators: Dig and prepare sites for underground infrastructure.

Skills and Abilities Needed

Construction equipment operators combine technical control with safety-focused judgment.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Training Pathway

Most construction equipment operators develop skills through hands-on training:

- High School Diploma or Equivalent: Typical minimum requirement
- Apprenticeship Programs: Paid training combining classroom instruction and field experience
- Equipment Operator Schools (optional): Formal training on specific machines
- On-the-Job Training: Learning under experienced operators
- Licensing or Certification (where required): Required for certain equipment such as cranes

Where Do Construction Equipment Operators Work?

Construction equipment operators work across a wide range of job sites:

- Construction and Infrastructure Projects
- Road, Highway, and Bridge Construction
- Residential and Commercial Building Sites

- Utility and Pipeline Projects
- Mining, Quarrying, and Earthworks Operations

Work often takes place outdoors and may involve long hours or seasonal schedules.

How Much Do Construction Equipment Operators Earn?

Earnings vary by equipment type, experience, and location:

- Entry-Level Operators: Typically earn hourly wages during training
- Experienced or Specialized Operators: Often earn higher pay
- Certified Crane or Heavy Equipment Operators: May earn more due to skill and responsibility

Compensation often includes overtime and union benefits.

Is This Career Difficult?

This career is physically and mentally demanding. Operators must maintain constant awareness, handle powerful machinery, and work in dynamic environments where safety is critical. The challenge lies in sustaining precision, focus, and safe operation throughout long or complex projects.

Who Should Consider Becoming a Construction Equipment Operator?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Enjoy operating machinery and equipment
- Prefer hands-on, outdoor work
- Are safety-conscious and detail-oriented
- Like contributing to large-scale projects
- Want a skilled trade with strong demand

How to Prepare Early

- Learn basic construction safety principles
- Develop hand-eye coordination and spatial skills
- Gain exposure to construction or equipment operation
- Take math or technical courses related to measurement
- Explore apprenticeship or operator training programs

Construction equipment operators shape the physical world by turning plans into progress, using skill, precision, and heavy machinery to build the roads, structures, and infrastructure that communities rely on every day.

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Source: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/construction-and-extraction/construction-equipment-operators.htm>