

Railroad Workers

SOC: 53-4011 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$75,680

Median Salary

77,900

Employment

+1.0%

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

7.4/10 - Good work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	8.6/10	Investigative	4.4/10
Artistic	3.4/10	Social	5.8/10
Enterprising	4.8/10	Conventional	7.4/10

■ Top Skills Required

Communication skills, Customer-service skills, Hand-eye coordination, Hearing ability, Leadership skills, Mechanical skills, Physical strength, Visual ability

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Railroad Workers are transportation and infrastructure professionals who operate, maintain, and support **rail systems that move passengers and freight safely across long distances**. Their work is essential to national logistics, public transportation, and industrial supply chains, ensuring trains run on schedule, tracks remain safe, and rail operations function smoothly in all conditions. This career is well suited for individuals who value teamwork, safety, and working in structured, mission-critical environments.

What Do Railroad Workers Do?

Railroad workers perform a wide range of duties depending on their role, all focused on safe and efficient rail operations.

Common responsibilities include:

- Operating locomotives or assisting with train movement
- Inspecting tracks, signals, railcars, and equipment
- Coupling and uncoupling railcars and assembling trains
- Monitoring train speed, signals, and track conditions
- Communicating with dispatchers and crew members
- Performing routine maintenance and repairs
- Following strict safety rules and operating procedures

Types of Railroad Workers

Railroad work includes several specialized roles:

- Locomotive Engineers: Drive trains and control speed and braking.
- Conductors: Coordinate train operations and oversee crew safety.
- Yardmasters and Yard Workers: Manage rail traffic and car movement in rail yards.
- Signal and Switch Operators: Maintain and monitor rail signaling systems.
- Track Maintenance Workers: Inspect and repair rails, ties, and track infrastructure.
- Railcar Inspectors and Repairers: Ensure railcars meet safety standards.

Skills and Abilities Needed

Railroad workers combine technical skill with constant safety awareness.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Training Pathway

Most railroad workers enter the field through employer-provided training:

- High School Diploma or Equivalent: Typical minimum requirement
- Paid Railroad Training Programs: Classroom and hands-on instruction
- On-the-Job Training: Supervised work with experienced crews
- Certification and Testing: Required to qualify for specific roles
- Ongoing Safety and Skills Training: Regular requalification and updates

Training standards are highly regulated and standardized.

Where Do Railroad Workers Work?

Railroad workers are employed across passenger and freight rail systems:

- Freight Rail Companies

- Passenger Rail and Transit Systems
- Rail Yards and Terminals
- Track and Infrastructure Sites
- Maintenance Shops and Facilities

Work may take place outdoors, in all weather conditions, and on rotating schedules.

How Much Do Railroad Workers Earn?

Earnings vary by role, seniority, and employer:

- Entry-Level Railroad Workers: Typically earn competitive wages during training
- Experienced Engineers and Conductors: Often earn higher pay with seniority
- Specialized or Supervisory Roles: May earn more with responsibility

Compensation often includes strong benefits and overtime opportunities.

Is This Career Difficult?

Railroad work is physically demanding and safety-critical. Workers must remain alert for long shifts, operate heavy equipment, and follow strict rules where mistakes can have serious consequences. The challenge lies in maintaining focus, safety, and teamwork under demanding conditions.

Who Should Consider Becoming a Railroad Worker?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Value safety, structure, and teamwork
- Are comfortable working outdoors and in all weather
- Can handle irregular or on-call schedules
- Prefer hands-on, operational work
- Want a stable career supporting national infrastructure

How to Prepare Early

- Develop strong safety awareness and responsibility
- Build physical stamina and coordination
- Practice communication and teamwork skills
- Learn basic mechanics and equipment handling
- Research railroad hiring and training programs

Railroad workers keep people and goods moving across vast distances, ensuring safe, reliable rail transportation through discipline, teamwork, and unwavering commitment to safety and infrastructure reliability.