

All about Transportation Technician Pay

When young men and women are looking into the possibility of a career as a transportation technician, or their parents are researching that option, the subject of pay quite naturally comes up.

There is often a strong tendency to focus on starting pay. That is especially true for young men and women entering the workplace for the first time. This is a natural tendency. However, with such an important choice as your career, there is much more to consider. It is easy to forget that starting wages will be important for a relatively short time. What is much more important is the long-term outlook for compensation, which includes how quickly you can move up the pay scale, the frequency of pay increases, how high the pay can go up, and what benefits are available to you.



In many skilled trade positions, there is a time period after you begin a new role, where you are a “newbie” who is just learning. This can take the shape of a formal apprenticeship or mentorship, or it may be completely informal, depending on the employer. Few employers are willing to pay higher wages to an employee new to the trade who has not yet shown their value, or proven that they are someone who will end up as a long-term productive employee. There is a period where you are “earning your stripes” or “paying your dues”. That is just the reality.

STARTING WAGES FOR TECHNICIAN ROLES	\$ Per Hour
Automotive Body Shop Technicians	12.24
Automotive Technicians	10.87
Bus & Truck Technicians	14.61
Farm Equipment Technicians	12.52
Marine Technicians	11.47
Motorcycle Technicians	11.12
RV Service Technicians	11.88

Source: May 2017 Data – Bureau of Labor Statistics
Starting wages based on 10th percentile earnings

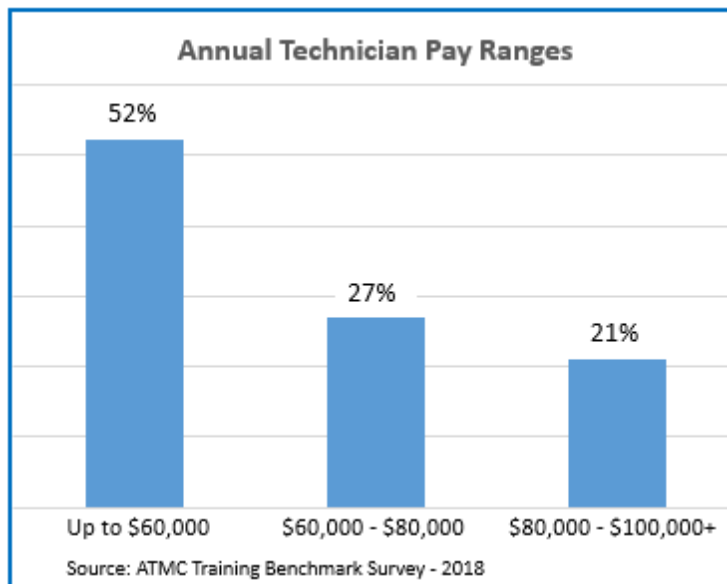
It is easy to make a poor choice in job selection by placing too much emphasis on what the starting wage is. Over the long haul, it is really not that important. Too many young men and women look at which job will give them that extra fifty cents or dollar an hour to start, and that is the job they choose. Meanwhile they never consider that the job that paid a dollar an hour less to start might be the same job that would pay them \$20,000 more per year as it develops into a career five years down the road.

When considering a career, look for something you love to do! Going every day to a job you love makes the difference between night and day in your overall happiness and quality of life. Then,

look at the long-term compensation for that job, and what successful people are making who have been in the business for a few years. If you are someone who would like to grow your career beyond just that initial role you are considering, then also look for an industry that has the stepping stones you will need to move you along in your career. You want to know that there is a career ladder. However, in the transportation industry, there are so many career opportunities that we like to go even further and call it a “career lattice”. You can go in countless directions ... go into workshop management, service management, open an independent garage, own a dealership, or work for a manufacturer. The list goes on and on.

If you are considering a career as a transportation technician, you should know that there are some things you can do to grow your career and maximize your earning power:

- Enroll in a Vocational / Technical Training Program (Vo-Tech). A recent survey of technicians working in the transportation industry showed that more than two-thirds graduated from a Vo-Tech Program.¹
- Once you find a Vo-Tech Program in your area, make sure that it has been accredited by the ASE Education Foundation (formerly NATEF). This ensures your program adheres to the highest standards and is teaching the skills that industry is looking for.
- Take the tests to become ASE Certified. ASE Certification is the standard in the industry, and many employers look for ASE Certified Technicians when hiring. In some cases they also design their pay plans to financially reward those with ASE Certifications.
- Some Vo-Tech schools also offer manufacturer-specific advanced training programs. Having that additional training can make you a better-qualified applicant, especially if you are looking to be employed by a dealer for a particular brand.



As you can see in the chart to the left, there is very good earning potential as a technician in the transportation industry. Demand is strong and is expected to stay that way for the foreseeable future. So before you decide to take that job in retail that will pay you a dollar per hour more than your local dealer or independent garage, consider all the possibilities and where you really want to be five or ten years down the road.