

T H E **J O B** C E N T E R

AUTO TECHNICIAN



Brett Hartings, a 2009 graduate of Marion Local High School and Tri Star Automotive, is a Tech Prep student majoring in Automotive Technology at the University of Northwestern Ohio. "My experience at UNOH has been great. I am so impressed with all of the instructors. They have all had real-world experience out in the field and are so knowledgeable," said Hartings. "Plus my college schedule works out great for me. I go to classes in the morning every Monday through Thursday and am off on Fridays, so I can get to my job at Huelsman Auto. My ultimate goal is to one day run my own shop."

The job responsibilities of automotive service technicians have evolved from mechanical repair to a high technology career.

Presently vehicles use high-tech computers and complex electronic systems to monitor the performance of the vehicle. A strong sense of understanding concerning the operation of a vehicle, including how each device interacts, as well as the ability to deal with electronic diagnostic equipment and digital reference manuals is key to the success of a technician.

High technology tools are needed to fix the computer equipment that operates everything from the engine to the radio in many cars. In fact, today most automotive systems, such as braking, transmission, and steering systems, are controlled primarily by computers and electronic components. Additionally, luxury vehicles often have integrated global positioning systems, Internet access, and other new features with which technicians will need to become familiar. Also, as more alternate-fuel vehicles are purchased, more automotive service technicians will need to learn the science behind these automobiles and how to repair them. As automotive technology becomes more complex, workers must be more adept in dealing with computerized shop equipment and electronic parts, while also retaining the necessary handtools skill set.

Postsecondary automotive technician training programs usually provide intensive career preparation through a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on practice. Colleges and universities update their curriculums frequently to reflect changing technology and equipment. Associate degree programs include classes in English, basic mathematics, computers, and other subjects, as well as automotive repair.

To have a successful career in this occupation, you will need:

- a broad knowledge of complex vehicle components
- the ability to work with electronic diagnostic equipment
- operational skills of computer-based technical reference manuals

Excellent reasoning skills and an understanding of vehicles is necessary for a technician to rapidly and precisely identify the problem. Diagnosing illusive problems proves to be challenging for technicians, but also provides a great deal of satisfaction. Specialization by automotive service technicians in large shops is not uncommon these days.

While most automotive service technicians work a standard 40 hour week, approximately 30 percent work longer hours. Some may work evenings and weekends to satisfy customer service needs. Generally, service technicians work indoors in well-ventilated and lighted repair shops.

Current Employment

Automotive service technicians and mechanics hold approximately 773,000 jobs in the USA. Automotive repair and maintenance shops and automotive dealers employed the majority of these workers—29 percent each. In addition, automotive parts, accessories, and tire stores employed 7 percent of automotive service technicians. Others worked in gasoline stations; general merchandise stores; automotive equipment rental and leasing companies; Federal, State, and local governments; and other organizations. Almost 17 percent of service technicians were self-employed, more than twice the proportion for all installation, maintenance, and repair occupations.

Job Prospects

Employment growth will continue to be concentrated in automobile dealerships and independent automotive repair shops. Many new jobs also will be created in small retail operations that offer after-warranty repairs, such as oil changes, brake repair, air-conditioner service, and other minor repairs generally taking less than 4 hours to complete.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Technicians need mechanical aptitude with above average electrical skills and computer skills coupled with good math and reading skills.

WHERE/HOW TO GET TRAINING

Schooling

Because automotive technology has become highly sophisticated, those seeking jobs as vehicle service technicians should complete a formal training program after high school. Some people choose to simply graduate and begin assisting experienced workers.

However, more positions, security, and upward mobility will be available to those who complete a postsecondary program. Completion of trade, technical, or vocational school will take six months to a year. The time commitment to community college will be two years, but the graduate will have an associate's degree and valuable lessons in basic mathematics, English, and computers.

Any of these programs typically will entail intensive career preparation with a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on practice. Students should try to enroll in a program accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology or the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation.

Certification and Advancement


Technicians should earn an Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification, which requires two years of working experience and passing an exam. ASE certification has become a standard

credential for automotive service technicians. While not mandatory for work in automotive service, certification is common for all non entry-level technicians in large, urban areas. Certification is available in 1 or more of 8 different areas of automotive service, such as electrical systems, engine repair, brake systems, suspension and steering, and heating and air-conditioning. For certification in each area, technicians must have at least 2 years of experience and pass the examination. Completion of an automotive training program in high school, vocational or trade school, or community or junior college may be substituted for 1 year of experience. For ASE certification as a Master Automobile Technician, technicians must be certified in all eight areas.

Financial Aid

Grants, scholarships, loans, and work/study programs are available for college students. For most of this aid, high school seniors must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, which is available from high school guidance offices and higher education financial aid offices.

For more information on federal financial aid programs, or to apply electronically, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov>.

 For more information on federal financial aid programs, call (800) 4FEDAID

FUTURE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to openings from growth, many job openings will be created to replace a growing number of retiring technicians.

Most people who enter the occupation can expect steady work, even during economic downturns.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Auto technicians are typically provided work uniforms on the job. Work conditions vary from smaller shops to large repair

facilities with multiple work stations and high-tech equipment. Most reputable shops are kept neat and clean.

RESOURCES - HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

ONLINE:

- www.natef.org (National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation)
- www.ascert.org (National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence)

- www.unoh.edu (University of Northwestern Ohio)

GENERAL:

Automotive Service Association
 P.O. Box 929
 Bedford, TX 76021-0929
www.asashop.org

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Projections Data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected Employment, 2016	Change, 2006-2026 Number Percent
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	49-3023	773,000	883,000	110,000 14

EARNINGS IN THIS FIELD

Median hourly wage-and-salary earnings of automotive service technicians and mechanics, including commission, were \$16.24. The middle 50 percent earned between \$11.96 and \$21.56 per hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$9.17, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$27.22 per hour. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of service technicians were as follows:

Local government, excluding schools.....\$19.07

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