RAILROADING OPERATIONS

Employment in most railroad transportation occupations is expected to grow more slowly than average through the year 2021, although job growth in individual occupations will vary. Demand for railroad freight service will grow because of the economy and the intermodal transportation of goods expanding. Intermodal systems use trucks to move shippers’ sealed trailers or containers to and from terminals and employ trains, which are more fuel-efficient than trucks, to transport them over the long distances between terminals. Railroads are improving delivery times and on-time service, while reducing shipping rates, in order to compete with other modes of transportation, such as trucks, ships, and aircraft. Technology will allow railroads to improve productivity and consolidate duties. Opportunities are expected to be good for qualified applicants, due mainly to the large number of workers expected to retire or leave these occupations in the next decade. Prospects will be best for those positions that are also expected to see growth, for example locomotive engineers and conductors.

Employment Information

**Greater Kansas City Area:** In 2016, those employed in the field of railroad operations held an estimated 2,053 jobs in the fifteen counties in Kansas and Missouri that make up the Kansas City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), with 2,056 projected by 2021 (+0.1%). Of those 2016 jobs, 802 were locomotive engineers (804 projected, +0%); 391 were railroad brake, signal, and switch operators (392 projected, +0%); and 859 were railroad conductors and yardmasters (860 projected, +0%).

**State:** In Kansas, those employed in railroad operations held an estimated 2,358 jobs in 2016, with 2,343 jobs projected by 2021 (-0.6%). Of those 2016 jobs, 900 were locomotive engineers (892 projected, -1%); 439 were railroad brake, signal, and switch operators (440 projected, +0%); and 1,019 were railroad conductors and yardmasters (1,010 projected, -1%).

**National:** About 104,963 jobs were held in the field of railroad operations in 2016, with 107,258 jobs projected by 2021 (+2.2%). Of those jobs in 2016, 39,922 were locomotive engineers (40,782 projected, +3%); 20,003 were railroad brake, signal, and switch operators (20,545 projected, +3%); and 45,038 were railroad conductors and yardmasters (45,931 projected, +2%). All together 2,295 openings are anticipated due to job growth and the need for replacements.

September 2017
Salary Information

**Greater Kansas City Area:** Locomotive engineers employed in the Greater Kansas City area earned an average hourly wage of $30.84 in 2016. Additionally, railroad conductors and yardmasters earned $30.04 per hour, and railroad brake, signal, and switch operators earned $27.40 per hour.

**State:** Locomotive engineers in Kansas earned an average hourly wage of $27.51 in 2016. Additionally, railroad conductors and yardmasters earned $27.14 per hour; and railroad brake, signal, and switch operators earned $23.37 per hour.

**National:** Locomotive engineers working full-time earned an average hourly wage of $28.05 in 2016. Additionally, railroad conductors and yardmasters earned $27.07 per hour; and railroad brake, signal, and switch operators earned $26.66 per hour.

**JCCC Placement and Salary Information**

The JCCC Office of Institutional Research conducts a follow-up study of program completers one year after completion. Seventy-seven percent of the graduates who responded to the follow-up study conducted during 2015-16, and were employed, reported being employed in a related field and reported earning an average hourly wage of $29.96.

**Note:** Salary Information for Greater Kansas City, State, and National is based on EMSI 2016 third quarter data. JCCC information for career program completers is based on data supplied by respondents to follow-up studies and is not necessarily representative of all career program completers. Other sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics.