



The Safety Specialist: A Job Profile

The mission of **health and safety specialists** is to ensure healthy and safe work environments for all. They serve to protect people and the environment from unnecessary harm. Health and safety specialists are also referred to by the following titles: occupational health and safety inspectors, occupational health and safety specialists, occupational health and **safety technicians**, ergonomists, industrial hygienists, and environmental protection officers. No matter what their titles, though, these individuals all assist institutions in creating safer and cleaner processes for doing business.

The task of a health and **safety specialist** begins with analyzing and evaluating workplaces. He or she then finds ways to improve working conditions, if need be, or to maintain the present conditions if they test out positively. If a particular problem is identified, these specialists must come up with ways to eliminate it. These specialists also assist companies in running training sessions for management, developing new safety procedures, and monitoring the progress of various safety programs.

The source of a problem in a workplace environment can be chemical, biological, or radiological in nature. Health and safety specialists must inspect workplaces thoroughly to insure that all procedures comply with federal and state law, as well as company standards. Additionally, they test the effectiveness of any and all company-sponsored safety and health programs.

All occupational health and safety specialists share the same objective, which is to identify and correct harmful or hazardous conditions that may affect workers, the environment, or the general public. The areas of specialty within the field may be broken down in the following three ways:

- Environmental protection specialists — These are specialists who evaluate any programs that impact the environment. This work may include things such as the disposal of hazardous waste.
- Industrial hygienists — These specialists run tests in the workplace to identify any hazardous health agents. These may include pesticides, asbestos, or any communicable diseases.
- Health physicists — These are specialists who monitor material that is radioactive, including the manufacturing, handling, and disposal of such material.

All of these health and safety specialists are looking for any potential accidents and health hazards. In order to do this effectively, evaluations and assessments are done using a variety of measures. Surveys are conducted with employees and management. Tests are run on all equipment. Observations are made of workers on the job.

Occupational **health and safety** specialists are called in when an accident of some kind occurs in the workplace. They go in and run an investigation to determine the cause of the accident and to see if any safety codes were violated. Furthermore, they make suggestions on how to prevent similar accidents in the future.

People in this field do lots of writing of one kind or another. Most importantly, they formulate and write the policies which eventually become law. They also prepare procedural manuals for companies. These specialists must also prepare various reports, including accident reports and workplace analysis reports. Additionally, there are forms that must be filed with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Many of these forms refer to operational initiatives dealing with hazardous materials. Occupational health and safety specialists are the ones likely to give testimony in court if there is a lawsuit of some kind against a given company.

All people working in the field of occupational health and safety have a college degree. Their major is most likely going to be in occupational health and safety itself, or a related field. Most of these jobs require experience of some kind. An examination is also required to become certified. The individual then gets on-the-job training. Several agencies offer certification in this field, including:

- The American Board of Industrial Hygiene
- The Board of Certified Safety Professionals
- The Council on Certification of Health, Environmental, & Safety Technologists



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Nearly two out of five workers in the field of occupational [health and safety](#) work for the federal government. The job outlook for this field is on par with that of other jobs in the country. While it's true that we have become extremely concerned about the environment and people's health and safety in the workplace, when the economy is down and jobs are eliminated, this is among the areas which may suffer. Companies may opt to focus on what is mandatory and put off some of the more costly elective spending.

Salaries vary greatly depending on where the given job is located and whether or not the individual is working for the government or a private company. The average annual salary is \$44,400 for a government worker. A person working for a

company may earn something more like \$79,530 per year. If a person excels in this field, good money may come from different areas, particularly consulting and writing. Writing manuals for companies and writing articles for health and science magazines can be quite profitable. Many occupational health and safety specialists also advance to positions in a supervisory capacity.

If you're interested in this field as a career, you should read more about it. You can get more information by writing to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration or going to their website.

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