

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY SPECIALIST

Job Description: Large-scale energy industries - including power plants, coal mining operations, oil and gas exploration and extraction, gas processing plants, ethanol production, and wind energy development - all involve potentially hazardous working conditions, equipment, and materials. The goal of an occupational health and safety specialist is to maintain a safe work environment for the employees of a business. He or she will review, evaluate, and analyze workplaces as well as design programs and procedures to control, eliminate, and prevent disease or injury to employees.



The specialist may conduct inspections and enforce adherence to laws and regulations governing the health and safety of individuals. Other tasks include:

- Ordering suspension of activities that pose threats to workers' health and safety
- Investigating workplace accidents to identify causes and determine how such accidents can be avoided in the future
- Recommending measures to help protect workers from potentially hazardous work methods, processes, or materials
- Inspecting or evaluating workplace environments, equipment, or practices to ensure compliance with safety standards and government regulations
- Conducting safety training or education programs and demonstrating the use of safety equipment

Needed Skills and Education: To be effective, the occupational health and safety specialist is a person who values independence and is sometimes at odds with business management. High levels of skill are needed in collecting information about health and safety laws and regulations, inspecting materials to check adherence to standards, investigating data to solve problems, preparing case reports, and providing protective services. They typically need a bachelor's degree in occupational health and safety or a related field such as engineering, biology, or chemistry. For some positions, a master's degree is required.

Wages: In North Dakota, the average annual wage for occupational health and safety specialists is \$56,230. This is somewhat below the national average annual wage of \$67,960. The average hourly wage in North Dakota is \$27.03.

Other Information: The employment outlook for this career is stable for both North Dakota and nationally. Many employers encourage certification, which can be obtained from several organizations, including the Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP).

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