

DELTA COLLEGE
COUNSELING/ADVISING & CAREER SERVICES
AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE TECHNICIAN

Salary range: \$19,600 - \$66,180 annually

Personal Interests: Working with your hands and tools

Work Environment: Basically indoors

Description

Automotive service technicians, inspect, maintain, and repair automobiles and light trucks with gasoline engines, such as vans and pickups. The increasing sophistication of automotive technology now requires workers who can use computerized shop equipment and work with electronic components, while maintaining their skills with traditional handtools. Workers with these new skills are increasingly called “service technicians”

A technician’s job is to diagnose the source of the problem quickly and accurately. One of the technician’s most valuable skills requires good reasoning ability and a thorough knowledge of automobiles. Many technicians consider diagnosing “hard to find” troubles one of their most challenging and satisfying duties.

During routine service, mechanics inspect and lubricate engines and other components. They also repair or replace parts before they cause breakdowns. Technicians usually follow a checklist to ensure they examine all-important parts. Belts, hoses, plugs, brakes and fuel systems, the onboard automotive computer and other potentially troublesome items are among those closely watched.

Technicians use a wide variety of tools in their work. They use power tools such as pneumatic wrenches to remove bolts quickly, machine tools like lathes and grinding machines to rebuild brakes,

welding and flame cutting equipment to remove and repair exhaust systems, and jacks and hoists to lift cars and engines. They also use common handtools like screwdrivers, pliers, and wrenches to work on small parts in hard-to-reach places. There is also the increasing use of electronic scanning devices and diagnostic tools.

Working Conditions

Most automotive technicians work 40-48 hours per week, but many self-employed mechanics work longer hours. To satisfy customer service needs, many mechanics provide evening and weekend service. Generally, technicians work indoors in well-ventilated and lighted repair shops. However, some shops are drafty and noisy. Technicians frequently work with dirty greasy parts, and in awkward positions. They often lift heavy parts and tools. Minor cuts, burns, and bruises are common, but serious accidents are avoided when the shop is kept clean and orderly and safety practices are observed. Some problems can be fixed with simple computerized adjustments avoiding the need to get dirty.

Training, Other Qualifications

Many schools, community colleges, and public and private vocational and technical schools offer automotive technician training programs. Post-secondary programs generally provide more thorough career preparation than high school programs. Some high school programs offer only an introduction to automotive technology and service for

the future consumer or hobbyist, while others aim to equip graduates with enough skill to get a job as a technician's helper or trainee after graduation.

Post-secondary automotive technician training programs vary greatly in format, but generally provide intensive career preparation through a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on practice. Some trade and technical school programs provide concentrated training for six months to a year, depending on how many hours the student must attend each week. Community college programs normally spread the training out over two years, supplement the automotive training with instruction in english, basic mathematics, computers, and other subjects, and award an associate degree or certificate.

At Delta College, the Automotive Service Technology program prepares students to enter the automotive field as a technician or service writer. Both a Certificate and a broader based Associates Degree are available. For those interested in specific segments of an automotive course, short-term courses are also available.

Experienced technicians who have leadership ability may advance to shop supervisor or service manager. Technicians who work well with customers may become automotive repair service estimators. Some with sufficient funds open independent repair shops

Job Outlook

Job opportunities in this occupation are expected to be good for persons who complete automotive training programs in high school, vocational and technical schools, or community colleges. Persons whose training includes basic electronic skills should have the best

opportunities. Persons without formal training are likely to face competition for entry-level jobs. Michigan outlook through 2014 is expected to average about 966 openings per year. Most persons who enter the occupation can expect steady work because changes in economic conditions have little effect in the automotive repair business.

Earnings

Technicians in repair shops may be paid a percentage of labor charges for repairs they make or a flat rate minimum. Skilled technicians usually earn between 2 to 3 times as much as inexperienced helpers and trainees. Earnings as of May 2006 were:

	Annual	Range
National	\$36,070	\$19,070- \$56,620
Michigan	\$40,830	\$19,600- \$66,180

Related Occupations

Other workers who repair and service motor vehicles include diesel truck and bus technicians, motorcycle technicians, marine technicians, automotive body repairers, and repair service estimators.

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Sources: Occupational Outlook Handbook, MI Occupational Information System, Eureka, and Delta College Catalog.

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<http://www.delta.edu/careercenter>

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