

Driller and Blaster

Drill the holes, load the explosives, fire the shot. A licensed job that breaks rock for quarries, mines and highways.

TYPICAL PAY

\$78,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$56k to \$102k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 3 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Quarries, open-pit mines, highway and pipeline construction, demoli...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
The usual minimum. Math and shop help. A driver's licence is expected; a Class 1 or Class 3 licence is a plus on construction.
- 2 Driller or heavy equipment operator** 6 to 18 months
Drillers run tracked drill rigs that bore the blast holes to the pattern. Many start on a loader or excavator and move onto the drill.
- 3 Blaster's helper** 6 to 12 months
Carrying explosives, loading holes, tying in the circuit under a certified blaster. BC requires at least 6 months of this before you can test.
- 4 Blasting certificate** After your helper time
In BC: 18 or older, at least 8 hours of explosives safety training, documented experience, a federal explosives approval, and a WorkSafeBC written exam. Other provinces run similar tests through their labour or apprenticeship departments.
- 5 Blaster, then lead blaster** 2 to 5 years in
Designing patterns, calculating charges, running the shot and keeping the blast records.

Pros and cons

- + Licensed skill with real pay and no tuition
- + Paid to learn as a helper
- + Every road cut, quarry and open-pit mine needs one
- Explosives: one mistake can kill you or someone else
- Noise, dust, weather, remote sites
- Construction blasting slows in winter

Good to know

Only about 2,200 people do this

Job Bank counted around 2,200 surface drillers and blasters in Canada in 2023, one of the smallest occupations on this site. About 22% are 50 or older, with a median retirement age of 66.

The exam is written, and you can fail it

BC's mine blaster program runs two timed online exams, regulatory and technical. You get three attempts at each, with a week's wait between failed tries, and both must be passed within six months of r...

Optional boosts

Underground blasting. Demolition. Avalanche control. Seismic blasting.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Drillers and blasters (surface mining, quarrying and construction), wages (updated Nov 2025)

WorkSafeBC: Blaster certification

Open School BC: BC Mine Blaster certification program

Job Bank: Drillers and blasters, job requirements and regulation by province

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/driller-blaster>



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