

Building Inspector

Check that buildings are built to code, and sign off before people move in.

TYPICAL PAY

\$74,690

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$47k to \$114k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Job sites, city and county offices, homes, a work truck

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or GED (General Educational Development) test** Grade 12
Take every shop, drafting and math class your school offers.
- 2 Get construction experience** 3 to 5 years
Work as a carpenter, electrician, plumber or concrete finisher. Employers want somebody who has actually built what they are inspecting.
- 3 Or take a building inspection program** 1 to 2 years
A 2-year associate degree or a shorter certificate at a community college. Some programs run fully online.
- 4 Pass certification exams** Weeks of study each
Computer-based code exams run by the International Code Council. Residential building inspector is the usual first one.
- 5 Get hired and add certifications** Ongoing
Start as a residential inspector, then add commercial, mechanical, electrical and plans examiner tickets to become a combination inspector.

Pros and cons

- + Government pay, pension and steady daytime hours
- + You get off the tools without leaving construction
- + Short, cheap training compared with a degree
- People are angry at you a lot of the day
- The federal projection has this job shrinking, not growing
- You need years of construction experience first, so it is not a direct path from high school

Optional boosts

Residential and commercial building inspector. Plans examiner. Mechanical, electrical and plumbing inspector. Certified building official.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Construction and Building Inspectors (47-4011.00)

International Code Council: certification

Portland Community College: Building Inspection Technology

Apprenticeship.gov: United States Department of Labor

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/building-inspector>

Good to know

The code is a book, and it keeps changing

Most states build from the International Building Code and International Residential Code, written by the International Code Council and updated every three years. States and cities then add th...

An inspector can stop an entire job

A failed inspection means the work gets corrected before anything else goes on top of it. No certificate of occupancy means nobody legally moves in, no matter how finished the building looks.



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