

Driller and Blaster

Drill the holes, load the explosives, move the rock. One of the few jobs where a mistake is final.

TYPICAL PAY

\$61,390

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$40k to \$99k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Quarries, surface and underground mines, road construction, demolit...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma or equivalent** Grade 12
Plus a clean criminal record. That part is not optional: handling explosives requires a federal background check.
- 2 Get hired as a helper** Weeks to months
At a quarry, a mine, a road contractor or a drilling company. A commercial driver's license and heavy equipment experience help a lot.
- 3 Federally required safety training** 1 to 2 weeks
New miner training before you set foot on a mine site, run under the Mine Safety and Health Administration rules, roughly 24 hours for surface and 40 for underground.
- 4 Learn drilling, then loading** 1 to 3 years
Pattern layout, drill operation, hole depth and angle, then stemming, priming and wiring under a licensed blaster's eye.
- 5 Blaster license** After your hours
Most states run their own exam and require documented experience, often 1 to 3 years, before they will license you to fire a shot.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from day one with no tuition at all
- + Strong pay for a job with no degree requirement
- + A licensed, skilled trade that few people can do
- The federal profile shows employment declining in this occupation
- Genuinely dangerous, and carelessness kills people
- Remote sites, early starts, dust, noise and weather

Good to know

The bang is a rounding error

A large quarry shot can contain hundreds of holes fired milliseconds apart, so the whole blast is over before you finish blinking. Days of drilling, loading and checking go into that one second.

Timing does the work, not power

Modern electronic detonators fire holes in a designed sequence a few milliseconds apart. Getting the sequence right breaks rock into the size the crusher wants and keeps the vibration away from nearby ho...

Optional boosts

Blasting fundamentals certificate. Seismograph operator certificate. CDL (commercial driver's license) with hazardous materials endorsement. Heavy equipment tickets.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Explosives Workers, Ordnance Handling Experts, and Blasters (47-5032.00)
Mine Safety and Health Administration, United States Department of Labor
Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement
International Society of Explosives Engineers

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/driller-blaster>



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