

Underground Miner

Run loaders and shuttle cars a mile underground. Good money, no degree, real danger.

TYPICAL PAY

\$74,500

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$52k to \$88k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 1 year

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Underground coal, salt, potash and metal mines

How you get there

- 1 Finish high school** Grade 12
A diploma or an equivalency certificate is what most mines ask for. Mechanical and electrical shop classes help you get picked.
- 2 Get hired** Weeks to months
Apply directly at mine offices and at the big operators. A clean driving record, a drug test and being willing to work nights matter more than grades.
- 3 New miner training** About 40 hours
Federal rules under the Mine Safety and Health Administration require classroom and underground training, roughly a week of it, before you work alone underground.
- 4 State certification** Days to weeks
Coal states run their own card systems. West Virginia, for example, runs 40 hour and 80 hour certified training courses through its state mining office.
- 5 Qualify on equipment** 6 months to 2 years
Task training on each machine you run, signed off by the mine. Shuttle car, scoop, roof bolter, continuous miner, each is its own sign off.

Pros and cons

- + Over \$70,000 a year with no college debt
- + Hired and paid from your first week
- + Skills that move between mines and states
- Roof falls, machinery and gas are real ways to get killed
- Dust disease can take your lungs decades later
- Mines close when the price of coal or ore drops

Optional boosts

Mine electrician certification. Mine foreman or fire boss card. Mine rescue team. Commercial driver's license.

Good to know

Mining pays well above the national average

The National Mining Association puts average annual pay across the United States mining industry at around \$95,000, and counts about 488,000 direct mining jobs. Very few industries pay that with a high...

The job is shrinking

Federal projections rate this occupation as declining. Machines and remote controlled equipment do more of the work every year, and coal demand keeps falling. The mines that remain still pay well, but th...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Loading and Moving Machine Operators, Underground Mining (47-5044.00)
Mine Safety and Health Administration: training and education
West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training
United Mine Workers of America

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/underground-miner>



Scan for the full clicker