

Mine Safety and Health Administration

Inspector Career Intern Program - Questions and Answers

(Revised December 2009)

Q: What is the MSHA Inspector Career Intern Program?

The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) Inspector Career Intern Program is designed to obtain talented and motivated individuals who have the skills to help the agency move into the 21st Century. To support MSHA's goal of hiring and developing the best Inspectors to protect the health and safety of our Nation's miners, MSHA has instituted the use of the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP). The authority for the FCIP is [5 CFR 213.3202\(o\)](#) and [Executive Order 13162](#).

MSHA's Inspector Career Intern Program is intended to provide an integrated method to hire and develop well-trained and well-qualified Mine Safety and Health Inspectors. Inspector career interns will complete a formal training and development program that will provide an understanding of mine health and safety programs, expand technical skills, and build professional credibility. Inspector interns will participate in a series of training modules, including at least 20 weeks at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beckley, West Virginia, augmented by on-the-job training at mine sites and the job location. Internships will typically last 24 months. Individuals who successfully complete MSHA's Inspector Career Intern Program will be eligible for promotions and permanent placement within MSHA.

Q: Who is eligible to apply for the MSHA Inspector Career Intern positions?

All U.S. Citizens who have a valid State issued driver's license and meet the basic experience and physical qualification requirements for GS-1822, [Mine Safety and Health Inspector](#) positions may apply. Additionally, some positions may require applicants to have experience in certain categories of mines (e.g., coal vs. metal and nonmetal, or surface vs. underground), or those with particular expertise in special aspects of mining (e.g., electrical, roof control, ventilation, etc.). Current MSHA Inspectors are not eligible for consideration under the FCIP because formal training has already been completed. MSHA Inspectors interested in a transfer to another district/field office should file a request under the terms of the Bargaining Unit Agreement, Article 48, Interstation Transfer.

Q: What are the minimum qualification requirements?

Candidates must meet minimum qualification requirements for GS-1822, [Mine Safety and Health Inspector](#) positions. Most positions are advertised at the GS-7/9/11 levels. You will need to check the vacancy announcement or schedule to find out what grade levels are being considered at each job screening. Minimum qualification requirements:

Experience for GS-7: On-site safety/health inspection, analysis, monitoring, or evaluation work in occupational health, or mining or closely related industries, such as building construction, excavation, and heavy industrial plant settings. Examples of creditable experience in related non-mining work include work that provided the applicant with knowledge of ground control at building sites, safe worksite practices, and/or environmental conditions that affect the health of workers at foundries, mills, and other inherently dangerous industrial settings. For example, performance of safety and health inspection work at a steel mill would qualify at this grade level, but agricultural inspection work would not.

Education for GS-7: One year of Graduate level (Master's) education in fields such as mining engineering, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, industrial engineering, environmental engineering, industrial hygiene, occupational health and safety, geology, chemistry, or other fields of study related to mine safety and health work.

Education for GS-9: Two years of Graduate level (Master's) education in fields such as mining engineering, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, industrial engineering, environmental engineering, industrial hygiene, occupational health and safety, geology, chemistry, or other fields of study related to mine safety and health work.

Experience for GS-9: Mining, mine engineering, or on-site mine safety and health inspection experience performing a full range of tasks and operating a variety of equipment in underground or surface mines, or mineral processing plants. This includes practical mining experience in planning, installing, operating, monitoring, or maintaining a system or equipment for extracting the ore from the earth. Specialized experience should include extensive hands-on mining experience that provided the applicant with a comprehensive knowledge of mining methods, equipment, and occupational health and safety hazards. Specifically, applicants should have knowledge of the transportation of materials and workers, ventilation in closed spaces, ground control, roof control (for underground positions), handling and storage of hazardous materials, worksite safety practices, worksite environmental conditions that affect the health of workers, and/or accident prevention.

Experience for GS-11: Experience performing mine safety and health inspections; analysis and evaluation of health/safety aspects of mining industry operations and processes; or evaluation, analysis or development of agency programs. Examples of specialized experience include: direct on-site inspection; special accident investigation; development of mine safety and health standards; data analysis and evaluation of operational mine safety and health programs; special assessments; and development of industry-wide training or safety and health awareness programs.

Electrical Inspector Positions at the GS-9 and Above: All applicants for Inspector (Electrical) positions at GS-9 and above must meet the specialized experience requirements for inspector positions **and**, in addition have experience in designing, installing, and/or maintaining a mine electrical system or electrical mining equipment. Experience as a certified mine electrician is qualifying. Education alone is not qualifying for these positions.

Q: How do I apply for MSHA Inspector positions?

Interested candidates should follow the "How to Apply" instructions listed within posted vacancy announcements to preregister for job screenings. Before a vacancy announcement is posted, you can create a user account and your Federal resume at www.USAJOBSONPM.gov. Once a vacancy announcement is posted on our website, select the vacancy announcement, scroll to the bottom of the page and select "Apply Online."

Q: What type of information should I include in my resume?

It is important for you to remember that we need specific examples of work that you have performed. Your resume should state the specific duties you have performed and what actions you have taken. Give examples of when you performed work in mining, mine engineering, or conducted on-site mine safety and health inspections. Give examples of work situations where you gained the knowledge of transporting materials and workers, ventilating closed spaces, performing ground control and roof control duties, handling and storing

hazardous materials, practicing worksite safety, and reviewing worksite environmental conditions that affect the health of workers and/or the prevention of accidents.

Don't worry about how long your resume is. It is better to have more information than not enough. Keep in mind that if you make it through the testing and interviewing process, your resume is the only information the manager making the selection will see. It is in your best interest to provide the manager with enough information to make an informed decision.

Q: Do I need to send my college transcript, DD 214, or copies of certifications?

Each vacancy announcement includes a "Required Documents" section. Additional materials do not need to be sent before the job screening. You should bring copies of required documents to the job screening. Do not bring originals – make a copy and bring with you to the job screening. Documentation you provide will not be returned to you.

Q: I did not apply to the vacancy announcement. Can I still attend the job screening?

Seating for the employment screening is limited to seating capacity of testing facilities; therefore, advance registration is encouraged. However, walk-in candidates will be considered a first-come, first-serve basis on the day of the employment screening. Applicants who arrive after testing commences will not be tested that day. Walk-in candidates must bring a resume and valid driver's license. See above for specific information that should be included in your resume.

Q: What can I expect at the job screening?

7:00 am - 8:00 am - Registration

8:00 am - 9:15 am - Timed math test consisting of 30 questions;

9:15 am - 10:00 am - Math test rated and applicants notified of results;

10:00 am - 11:30 am - Timed writing test;

11:30 am - 1:30 pm - Writing test rated and applicants notified of results.

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm – Electrical test for qualified candidates interested in Electrical Inspector positions. Structured interview to follow.

Starting at approximately 1:30 pm - Structured Interviews. Candidates that have passed both math and writing tests will be scheduled a specific time for an interview to take place in the afternoon.

Q. Why are math and writing tests required for MSHA Inspector positions?

MSHA has extensively evaluated the skills and training for its inspectors to competently perform mine safety and health inspection, enforcement, and related compliance assistance activities. Basic math skills are required to successfully carry out various inspection activities, including those related to: hoisting, ventilation, ground control, load haul and dump, health sampling, electrical, and materials storage and handling. Writing skills are essential to producing clear, accurate, and understandable reports of inspections and investigations.

Q: What does the math test include?

Applicants are given 60 minutes to complete a math test consisting of 30 multiple-choice questions covering basic arithmetic and math reasoning. The questions are geared towards solving mathematical problems which are similar to those encountered during regular mine inspections. *Applicants may not use a calculator to take the test.* To prepare for the math test, applicants should be prepared to calculate the following types of equations related to many of the math questions:

- Converting Percentages to Decimals (Example: 37% = .37)
- Converting Decimals to Percentages (Example: .314 = 31.4%)
- Adding, subtracting, dividing, and multiplying Decimals
(Examples: $23.4 \times .45 = 10.530$; $40.6 + 8.06 = 48.66$; $24 - 13.67 = 10.33$;
 $42/1.5 = 28$)
- Changing Fractions to Decimals (Examples: $.75 = \frac{3}{4}$; $\frac{3}{4} (.75) + \frac{4}{5} (.80) = 1.55$)
- Adding, subtracting, dividing, and multiplying Fractions
(Examples: $\frac{2}{3} + \frac{3}{4} = 1 \frac{5}{12}$; $\frac{7}{8} - \frac{2}{3} = \frac{5}{24}$; $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{2}{3} = \frac{1}{2}$; $\frac{4}{9}$ divided by $\frac{5}{6} = \frac{8}{15}$)
- Calculating the perimeter, circumference and area of circles, rectangles, and/or trapezoids
(Formulas will be provided:
 - Area of rectangle: $A = w \times h$;
 - Area of a circle: $A = \pi r^2$;
 - Area of a trapezoid: $A = [(b_1 + b_2)/2]h$;
 - Perimeter of a four-sided figure: $P = s + s + s + s$;
- Circumference of a circle: $C = 2\pi r$ or $C = \pi d$.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to practice under timed conditions. Sample problems can be found at the following link: <http://www.msha.gov/Inspectors/Inspectormathtest.pdf>

Q: What does the writing test include?

For the writing test, applicants are provided with an illustration of a mining accident and a series of facts about the accident. Applicants are given 60 minutes to prepare a written *legible* report consisting of a minimum of three paragraphs, but no more than the two pages provided. The applicants' written responses will be evaluated **only** on their ability to communicate in writing, and not of their knowledge of mine health and safety. Bulletized/numbered lists and/or single sentences **DO NOT** constitute paragraphs for the purpose of this exercise.

Q: How long are math and writing test results good for?

Test results are valid for two years. Candidates who have passed the math and writing test can attend job screenings to interview only until their test results expire.

Q: If I have already passed the math and writing tests, can I retake the math test to try for a better score?

No. Once you have passed the math and writing tests, the score is considered a "PASS." Percentages and number of correct answers are irrelevant at this stage. In addition, we like to ensure space availability for those candidates that need to take the test in order to be considered.

Q: What do I do if my test results are expiring?

Test results are valid for two years. Candidates within 6 months of their test results expiring have an option of interviewing or reestablishing their eligibility by going through the application process (retaking math and writing test). Should a candidate decide to reestablish eligibility

and not pass either the math or writing test, they will not be afforded the opportunity for an interview only. Interview only appointments are scheduled during the morning of the job screening. Interviews in the afternoon are reserved for candidates that pass the math and writing during the job screening process on that particular day. A candidate that is already on the District referral list, who elects to reestablish, but does not pass math or writing, will remain on the list until the original test results expire.

Q: What are structured interviews?

Managers and supervisors have traditionally relied on interviews to help them identify the best candidate. This reliance is appropriate, if managers and supervisors use a properly developed structured interview. Structured interviews consist of questions based on job analysis, detailed pre-determined rating scales, and trained interviewers to make the interview more job-related and systematic. The structured interview questions are based on the [Department of Labor's Competency Model for Mine Safety and Health Inspector/Specialist](#) positions. The results of the structured interviews will be used to determine the list of qualified candidates and to make a final selection decision. Structured interviews for MSHA inspector positions will generally include a list of general and/or technical questions that the applicant will be asked to answer. The same questions will be asked of all the applicants and will take approximately one hour to complete. Structured interviews are specific to the needs of each field or district location; therefore, structured interview results will not be transferable to inspector positions in other job locations. Applicants must be available to interview at the Federal Career Job Screening for each job location to which they have applied.

Q: What does the electrical test include?

Candidates interested in becoming an Electrical Inspector must pass an electrical test in addition to the math and writing tests. Candidates are given 30 minutes to complete 15 problems designed to assess the extent of their electrical knowledge. You do not need any experience or training in the area of mine safety and health to answer these questions.

Q: Does veteran's preference apply to the MSHA Inspector Career Intern Program?

Yes. On the date of the inspector career screening, you must provide the documentation to support your claim or you will not receive preference. If you are claiming 5-point preference you must submit a copy of your DD-214. Claims for 10-point preference require a DD-214, a completed SF-15 Application for 10-point Veterans' Preference Application, plus the required proof of eligibility as indicated on the back of that form.

Q: What are the physical requirements for MSHA Mine Safety and Health Inspector positions?

Applicants must be physically able to perform arduous duties efficiently and without hazard to themselves or others. A medical examination is required for all applicants for inspector positions. Medical conditions that constitute a hazard to safe and efficient job performance are disqualifying. The presence of medical disorders that would be aggravated by the environmental conditions of these positions and thereby hinder safe and efficient job performance are also disqualifying. Remediable defects and/or curable diseases will not permanently disqualify an applicant for the appointment, but may result in the applicant's suspension from the appropriate referral list pending submission of medical evidence or correction of the condition.

Physical requirements include: (1) Both legs are required. (2) Vision: screening includes distant, near, depth, peripheral, and color. The distant vision must be 20/40 (Snellen) in each eye, with or without correction. The near vision must be sufficient to read print that is the size

of type-written characters. The applicant must demonstrate normal stereo depth perception, with 40 seconds of arc. Peripheral vision must be normal and color vision must be sufficient to distinguish between basic colors associated with mine safety inspections. (3) Hearing: Applicants are NOT permitted to use hearing aids during testing. Hearing must be 40dB or better at 500, 1000, 2000, and 3000Hz. If the applicant does not meet this standard with the initial results, he/she will be retested. If the applicant does not meet the standards with the retest, he/she will have the option of taking a Functional Hearing Test, at his/her own expense, to determine whether he/she can perform duties safely without hazard to him/herself or others. (4) Ability to operate a motor vehicle. and (5) Ability for rapid mental and muscular coordination simultaneously.

Q: If I'm selected for this position, what are the conditions of employment?

- US Citizenship;
- Frequent travel (some Inspector positions require 5-15+ nights per month);
- Two-three year training period consisting of formal classroom training conducted at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beckley, WV, supplemented by on-site developmental training at mine sites and the job location;
- A valid state issued driver's license;
- For males between 18 and 25: Registration with the Selective Service System;
- Financial Disclosure Statement. All MSHA employees and their spouses, and minor children are prohibited by regulation from having any interest, direct or indirect, in any mine or mining company which may be directly affected by the work of MSHA through its investigations, technical research, or other activities. These interests are prohibited under the Department of Labor's Supplemental Standards of Conduction regulations at 5 CFR 5201.105. For questions related to this prohibition, please contact the agency's point of contact listed in this vacancy announcement. All MSHA Inspectors are required to file within 30 days of entrance of duty, and annually thereafter, a Confidential Financial Disclosure Report, OGE Form 450. A copy of this form can be found at www.usoge.gov/pages/forms_pubs_otherdocs/forms_pubs_other_pg3.html.

You must also successfully complete the following:

- Pre/post employment physical and medical examination;
- Pre/post employment Drug Testing;
- Background and suitability check.

Q: I have additional questions. Who can I call for more information?

For additional information please contact MSHA's Human Resources Division at (202) 693-9858. Alternatively, you can email questions to MSHAJOBS@dol.gov.