

Mine Safety and Health Administration

Mine Inspector Hiring Program - Questions and Answers

(Revised January 2012)

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

All U.S. Citizens

Q: How do I apply for MSHA Inspector positions?

All candidates may apply online. Standing Register announcements are posted and open continuously. You must apply to at least one of the following announcements:

DE-12-MSHA-COAL-7/9/11 if you are interested in Coal Districts 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11, and 12.

DE-12-MSHA-COAL-9/11 for Coal Districts 2, 6, 7, 8, and 10.

DE-12-MSHA-MNM-7/9/11 for all Metal-Non Metal Districts.

Applicants are limited to requesting consideration for a maximum of 4 field offices for each announcement. Vacancy Announcements are located at <http://www.doors.dol.gov/internalindex.asp> or www.usajobs.gov

Q: Does MSHA allow walk-in candidates to attend a test session?

MSHA will once again allow walk-in candidates on a first-come-first-serve basis. Pre-registered applicants will be allowed to register before walk-in applicants are considered. There is no guarantee that spaces will be available. Applicants who attend as a walk-in must bring a resume that fully describes the duties they have performed and a photo ID. It is highly recommended that applicants apply online by the cut-off date listed on the MSHA webpage for the test session they want to attend.

In addition, walk-in applicants will be required to submit an online resume to one of the standing registers after the test session in order to receive consideration after the test session.

Q: What are the minimum qualification requirements?

Applicants must have 52 weeks of specialized experience equivalent to at least the next lower grade level in the Federal Service.

At the GS-7 level: Specialized experience includes on-site safety/health inspection, analysis, monitoring, or evaluation work in occupational health, in 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.

At the GS-9 level: Specialized experience includes 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.

At the GS-11 level (M/NM and Coal Underground positions): Specialized experience includes 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. Education alone is not qualifying for this level.

At the GS-9 and GS-11 level (Electrical): Electrical candidates must have underground experience to qualify. In addition to meeting the above specialized experience requirement, electrical candidates must 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.

Substituting Education for Experience: Graduate education in the following fields is qualifying at the GS-7 (1 full academic year of graduate level education) and GS-9 (2 full academic years of graduate level education or master's or equivalent graduate degree) levels: 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.

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. JOB TITLES ARE NOT SUFFICIENT TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT YOU MEET THE MINIMUM QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS. 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. Disabled veterans and candidates with 5 or more years of mining experience/education are considered for placement before candidates that do not meet the five year requirement. Therefore, if you have 5 or more years of mining experience/education be sure your resume reflects this information. If your resume does not reflect that you meet this requirement, you may be placed in a lower category if referred to the selecting official for consideration.

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.

Since most communications from MSHA Human Resources will be sent electronically, it is extremely important that you ensure the email address on your resume is accurate.

For additional information go to <http://www.msha.gov/inspectors/inspectorhiringprogram.asp> and click on the "Preparing an MSHA Resume" link.

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

Yes. Each vacancy announcement includes a "Required Documents" section. Follow the directions to submit these documents.

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

Walk-in applicants will be allowed to attend on a first-come-first-serve basis. There is no guarantee that space will be available at a test session. Applicants are encouraged to apply online in order to reserve a space. Walk-in applicants will be required to submit an online resume after the test session in order to receive further consideration.

Q: What can I expect at the job screening?

- 7:00 am - 7:30 am - Registration
- 7:30 am - 8:00 am – Overview of Inspector hiring and what to expect if hired
- 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 at 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: 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.

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: 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.

In order to pass the interview, applicants at the GS-9 and GS-11 grade levels are required to answer a Mine Safety and Health competency question based on their mining experience.

Q: Will I still have to interview for each district I am interested in?

No. Once a candidate passes an interview in Coal or MNM the interview results will be valid for all Coal or MNM districts. Passing an interview at a Coal testing session will not will transfer to the Metal/Non Metal. You would have to attend a Metal/Non Metal test session to interview for their vacancies. The same applies for passing an interview with Metal/ Non Metal.

Q: Does veteran's preference apply to the MSHA Inspector Hiring 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: If I am referred for consideration, when does my eligibility expire?

Eligibility expires two years from the date you passed the math and writing tests.

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

Candidates within 6 months of their test results expiring will be notified by email. Candidates must retake math and writing tests and re-interview. A candidate that is already on the referral list who elects to reestablish eligibility but does not pass the math, writing or interview, will remain on the list until the original eligibility expires. Once eligibility has expired, interested candidates must reapply to posted vacancy announcements.

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. Medical examinations are required for all applicants for positions that involve regular or intermittent performance of inspection, investigation, rescue duties, or duties involving on-site visits. 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 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 http://www.usoge.gov/forms/form_450.aspx.

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) 693-9855. Alternatively, you can email questions to MSHAJOBS@dol.gov