

MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (MSHA) COAL INSPECTOR HIRING PROGRAM - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: How do I apply for MSHA Inspector positions?

All candidates must apply online to be considered for Coal Inspector vacancies. Standing Register announcements are posted and open continuously. You must apply to at least one of the following announcements:

DE-15-MSHA-COAL-7/9/11 if you are interested in Coal Districts 5, 9, and 11.

DE-15-MSHA-COAL-9/11 for Coal Districts 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 12.

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

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 experience in:

- 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

- mining equipment,
- ground/roof control (for underground positions),
- ventilation (for underground positions),
- worksite safety practices,
- worksite environmental conditions that affect the health of workers.

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At the GS-11 level (Underground positions): Specialized experience includes extensive hands-on mining experience that provided the applicant with a comprehensive knowledge of:

- 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;

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 regarding the bulleted areas listed above. 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.

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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.

Q: How do I get referred for MSHA Inspector positions?

- Submit an application with the required information specified in the job announcement.
- Attend required MSHA Career Job Screening for the job location.
- Pass required math and writing tests administered at the Job Screening. Applicants must be on time and provide a current and valid picture ID (State driver's license). Applicants may not retake tests at the same Job Screening session.
- Structured Interviews with MSHA managers and/or HRD personnel.

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

- Ability to obtain and maintain a Security Clearance
- US Citizenship
- Frequent Travel (5-15+ nights per month)
- Two year training period consisting of classroom training conducted at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beckley, WV, supplemented by on-site training at the job location.
- Possession of a valid driver's license
- For males between 18 and 25: Registration with the Selective Service System

Successfully completing the following:

- Pre-employment physical and medical examination
- Periodic Drug Testing
- Background check
- Financial Disclosure Statement. All MSHA employees are prohibited by regulation from having any interest, direct or indirect, in any mine or mining company which may directly affected by the work of MSHA through its investigations, technical research, or other activities. All employees must be on file a certification statement that they hold no such interests.

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

MSHA has extensively evaluated the skills and training required for its inspector 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 procedures, including: 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 multi-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 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: $A = \frac{(b_1 + b_2)}{2}h$;
 - Perimeter of a four-sided figure: $P = s + s + s + s$;
- Circumference of a circle: $C = 2\pi r$ or $C = \pi d$.

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Q: What does the writing test include and how is it evaluated?

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 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.

Q: What are structured interviews?

Managers have traditionally relied on interview to help them identify the best candidate. This reliance is appropriate, if managers use a properly developed structured interview. Structured interviews rely on

questions based on job analysis, detailed pre-determined rating scales, and trained interviewers to make the interview more job-related and systematic. The results of the structured will be used to determine the referral of candidates and to make a final selection decision. The United States Merit Systems Protection Board issued a **report** (<http://www.mspb.gov/studies/interviewing.pdf>) supporting the use of carefully structured interviews in the Federal hiring process. Structured interviews for MSHA Inspector positions will generally include four or five general and/or technical questions and last about 45 to 60 minutes to one hour.

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

Applicants who have received honorable or general discharge after serving on active military service may be eligible for veteran's preference. If your military service began after October 15, 1976, you must have a Campaign Badge, Expeditionary Medal, or a service-connected disability to receive preference. Before veteran's preference is granted, you must provide proof of your veteran's preference status (example: DD-214 or current VA Letter) with you to MSHA's Federal Employment Screening session.

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

Pre-placement physical exams are required for personnel that will conduct mine inspections, investigations, and/or rescue duties. These series include GS-1700, GS-1800, GS-1300 and GS-0690. Other positions that may require pre-employment physicals include Chemists and Geologists.

Physical requirements include the following medical screening: vital signs, hearing, vision, blood and urine samples, musculoskeletal abilities and general fitness, chest x-ray and pulmonary function tests.

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The results of physical examinations are reviewed by the MSHA appointed Medical Review Officer to make a determination on whether the applicant is medically qualified to conduct the duties of the position to be filled. If an applicant fails to meet any of the required medical or physical qualifications, they have the opportunity to provide additional medical information for consideration within 21 calendar days of being notified of their disqualification. When found medically disqualified, the applicant will receive their results in writing. The Medical Review Officer will evaluate any additional medical information provided and make their final recommendation to the Office of Employee Safety and Health.

The Office of Employee Safety and Health will provide all results to the Human Resources Office so applicants may be informed of their status as qualified for hire or eliminated from consideration. For applicants not meeting physical requirements, they may request the reasons for their disqualification in writing.

If candidate believes they were discriminated against, the candidate may file a discrimination complaint with the DOL Civil Rights Center within 30 calendar days of the date of the alleged discrimination.