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Career: Construction Managers

Large construction projects may take years or even decades to complete -- think of a high-rise office building or a subway system. On projects this complicated, teams of construction managers handle different steps. One team might be responsible for estimating costs. Another team might schedule the activities of the various subcontractors. And yet another team might work on-site supervising the construction work in progress.



On smaller projects, one team may tackle several, or even all, of these functions. Regardless of the size of a job, it takes a group of dedicated construction managers to keep the project running on schedule and within budget.

Construction managers plan and coordinate construction projects, including residential, commercial, and civil (or public works) building.

Did You Know?

Construction managers must be available to deal with emergencies at the site -- even when they happen in the middle of the night.

Are You Ready To...?

- Coordinate the work of architects, general contractors, subcontractors, and construction workers
- Check on construction progress and quality throughout a project
- Use computers to estimate costs and create schedules
- Prepare contracts and bids
- Keep projects under budget
- Hire and supervise workers
- Read blueprints

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Education

Employers look for people with construction experience and a bachelor's degree in construction management or civil engineering.

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Did You Know?

The U.S. government considers the number of construction projects a sign of the country's economic health.

- Apply for permits and licenses
- Make sure projects meet building and safety codes

It Helps to Be...

Attentive to detail, flexible, and creative. Since you'll be working with many people, from property developers to construction laborers, you'll also need to be skilled at communicating.

Make High School Count

- Work for a local construction company in the summers.
- Volunteer with a program like [Habitat for Humanity](#).
- Get a good foundation in math and physics.
- English classes are important, too. As a construction manager, you'll need excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Sign up for a class in computer-assisted drafting to get to know an important tool of the trade.

“The project could be going smoothly in the morning, and a single call can change everything. Next you're strategizing to keep the situation under control ... This presents endless challenges, so it's never boring.”

Art, Assistant Construction Project Manager

Outlook

Government economists expect jobs for construction managers to grow as fast as the average for all careers through 2014.

Many factors should drive job growth, including the increase of construction and remodeling of homes, factories, and public buildings. Plus, projects are becoming more complicated, creating more work for managers.

Still, it's important to keep in mind that construction jobs depend on a healthy economy. In a poor economy, there will be less work for managers.

Compensation

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that construction managers earned an average salary of \$80,070 in 2004.

Keep in mind, however, that salaries of construction

managers vary widely and depend on the project's size and location. In addition to typical benefits, many salaried construction managers receive bonuses and get to use company vehicles.

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