

Cable Installer and Repairer

At a Glance

Cable installers and repairers make it possible for you to surf the web and watch TV. They install and fix the cable lines and equipment in homes, offices, and other places.

16 Career Clusters

Architecture & Construction

Manufacturing

Earnings

Earnings Range: 12 - 35/hr

Level of Education

- High School
- 2-Year College or Technical Training

Core Tasks

- Install overhead and underground cables
- Put in jacks, terminal boxes, and splitters
- Install modems, converters, and other cable and Internet hardware
- Repair faulty cable lines and equipment
- Interact with customers and keep records of work performed

Attributes & Abilities

- Good vision
- Work well with your hands
- Physical strength
- Possibly knowledge of computer systems
- A driver's licence

Workplace

- Work for cable and telecommunications companies
- Work indoors and outdoors
- Usually work 8 hours a day, 5 days a week
- Potential dangers include falls and electrical shock
- The work can be physically demanding

Job Description

Flicking on the TV to watch your favorite show seems like no big deal. But have you ever thought about what it takes to bring cable TV into your home? Cable installers do the work to make this possible. They connect us to the news, sitcoms, and movies that entertain and inform us.

These workers install the coaxial and fibre-optic cables that bring TV and internet to many buildings. They install cables in homes, restaurants, offices, and other places. Sports bars, for instance, have cable TV so people can watch the games live. Many schools and hospitals also provide cable or internet services.

Installers string the cable from a utility pole or an underground junction box into the building. They may have to climb or balance on an aerial platform or pole, in all kinds of weather. Inside the building, workers install jacks and terminal boxes for the cable. They also connect TVs to the cable outlet.

People who work in this field usually repair cable as well. Workers may have to go to homes or businesses when signals are poor, or if the cable cuts out. To do the repairs, they may have to climb utility poles to check signals. They also check circuits to find out if there are any faulty lines or connections.

Cable installers have to write and file short reports, too. These documents describe the work they have done. They also show customers how to use their services.

Working Conditions

Cable installers and repairers often work for cable companies. They may also work for other telecommunications companies. They work both inside and outside in all kinds of weather.

Installers and repairers usually work a 5-day, 40-hour week. But they may have to do some overtime. This is often the case when bad weather interrupts or knocks out cable service.

There are some safety risks in this job. Workers can fall from poles or suffer electrical shocks. They are also exposed to the dangerous chemicals used to splice cables.

This can be physically demanding work. Installers must be able to climb, stoop, and crouch. They often have to lift heavy items, too. They may use hand tools, electrician's tools, and splicing chemicals on the job.

Earnings

Cable installers and repairers can work full time, part time, or on contract. They are usually paid an hourly wage. Most people in this field earn between \$13 and \$40 an hour. That works out to about \$28,000 to \$83,000 a year for full-time work. Some senior installers can earn more. The median income is \$25 an hour, or \$53,000 a year.

People just starting out in the job may earn anywhere from \$12 to \$18 an hour. For those who work full time, that's about \$25,000 to \$37,000 a year. Pay goes up as they gain experience. Other factors affecting income include employer, location, and expertise.

Some cable installers and repairers belong to labor unions. For example, many belong to the Communications Workers of America (CWA). Wage rates and benefits for these workers are negotiated by union leaders.

Installers who work full time usually receive benefits as well. Normally, these include health and dental insurance, paid sick days, and paid vacation days. They may also receive contributions to retirement income plans.

Massachusetts Wages

Occupation: Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers

Level of Experience	Hourly	Annual
Entry Wage	\$32.01	\$66,580
Median Wage	\$36.87	\$76,680
Experienced Wage	\$42.61	\$88,620

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics <http://www.bls.gov>

Massachusetts Outlook

Occupation: Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers

Employment

2014	3,010
2024	3,020

Change

Number	10
Percentage	0.2

Annual Average Openings

Total	Growth	Replacement
60	--	--

Source: Projections Central <http://www.projectionscentral.com>

Education

If you want to be a cable installer and repairer, you should get a high school diploma. Taking certain courses in high school will also help you out. Electronics, math, physics, and industrial arts courses are all good options.

You may also want to get some post-secondary training. Many colleges and technical schools offer related programs. You can study communications systems or electrical installment and repair.

You can earn a certificate or an associate degree. Certificate programs take about a year to finish. Associate degree programs take 2 years to complete. These degree programs tend to provide a broader education.

Once hired, you will likely get further training on the job. You may get the chance to learn from an experienced installer.

Some people choose to do a formal apprenticeship program. These are offered through employers or trade unions. They can last up to 5 years. They provide a mix of in-class learning and training on the job.

You can also get certified in this field. This isn't required, but it may help you advance in your career. The Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers (SCTE) offers a few options. To become certified, you have to pass an exam.

Cable companies that provide internet services may require installers to have extra skills. For these jobs, you will be trained to install, upgrade, and troubleshoot computer systems.

Most installers are required to have a driver's license.

Related College Programs

- Communications Systems Installation and Repair Technology

- Electrical/Electronics Equipment Installation and Repair, General
- Electrician

Other Suggested Qualifications

It's important that you have excellent vision and manual dexterity, good hand-eye coordination, and a good sense of balance. Some companies also require candidates to meet certain physical requirements, such as the ability to lift at least 50 pounds. Cable companies that provide high-speed Internet service may require installers to be qualified in installing, upgrading, and troubleshooting computer systems. Most installers are required to have a driver's license.

Sample High School Program of Study

This Program of Study can serve as a guide, along with other career planning materials, as learners continue on a career path. Courses listed within this plan are only recommended coursework and should be individualized to meet each learner's educational and career goals.

Telecommunications Arts, A/V Technology & Communications

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
English/Language Arts			
English/Language Arts I	English/Language Arts II	English/Language Arts III	English/Language Arts IV
Math			
Algebra I or Geometry	Geometry or Algebra II	Algebra II or Pre-Calculus or Trigonometry	Pre-Calculus or Trigonometry or AP Calculus
Science			
Biology	Chemistry	Physics	AP Science
Social Studies/Sciences			
World History	U.S. History	Political Science Economics	
Career & Technical Courses			
Introduction to Arts, Audio/Video Technology and Communications Information Technology Applications	Design and Production Technology Advanced Information Technology Applications	Principles of Telecommunication Systems	Advanced Analog and Digital Logic and Circuits

States' Career Clusters Initiative, 2008, www.careerclusters.org.

Important

- Check with your advisor to make sure that your course selections satisfy your graduation requirements.
- Courses available may vary from school to school.

Sample Career Path

People take different pathways through their careers, but no one starts at the top. This is an example of how the earnings, education and experience requirements, and responsibilities might progress for someone in this occupation.

Level 1

Sample Title	Trainee
Earnings	\$12 to \$15 an hour
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferably a high school diploma • Possibly further education or training in electronics or electrical technology
Responsibilities	Receiving on-the-job training; installing and repairing cable services at homes and businesses; installing other equipment (such as home theater equipment).

Level 2

Sample Title	Service / Installation Technician
Earnings	\$15 to \$30 an hour
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of on-the-job training or an apprenticeship
Responsibilities	Installing and repairing cable services at homes and businesses; installing other equipment.

Level 3

Sample Title	Maintenance Technician
Earnings	\$25 to \$35 an hour
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 to 15 years of experience as a technician • Possibly trade certification by an industry association
Responsibilities	

Level 3

Repairing and maintaining outside cable lines that feed subdivisions and other buildings.

Related Careers

Here are some other occupations that you might be interested in. Click on an occupation name to learn more.

- Audio-Visual Technician
- Broadcast Technician
- Electrician
- Electronics Repairer
- Lineworker
- Plumber
- Security Systems Technician

Career Clusters

Career Clusters are groups or families of occupations that share common characteristics such as knowledge requirements, skill sets, and/or goals.

Architecture & Construction

Manufacturing

National Employment by Industry

Industry	% Employed
Information	65
Construction	26

Source: O*Net Online, Browse by Industry, US Department of Labor
<http://online.onetcenter.org/find/industry>

Other Resources

Cabling Installation & Maintenance

This is an online trade magazine with helpful news and articles.
<http://www.cablinginstall.com>

National Coalition for Telecommunications Education and Learning (NACTEL)

Learn more about the telecommunications industry here. Check out the Resources section which has information about educational opportunities, as well as a helpful glossary.
<http://www.nactel.org>

National Cable & Telecommunications Association (NCTA)

This is a trade association for the cable industry. Click on Who We Are and then on Careers to get information on careers and internships at NCTA.
<http://www.ncta.com>

Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers (SCTE)

SCTE certifies professionals in the cable telecommunications field. Click on Certifications to find out about different certification programs.

<http://www.scte.org>

Occupational Outlook Handbook – Line Installers and Repairers

Career information from the US Department of Labor.

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/Installation-Maintenance-and-Repair/Line-installers-and-repairers.htm>