
Cargo and Freight Agents

(0*NET 43-5011.00)

Nature of the Work

Cargo and freight agents arrange for and track incoming and outgoing cargo and freight shipments in airline, train, or trucking terminals or on shipping docks. They expedite the movement of shipments by determining the route that shipments are to take and by preparing all necessary shipping documents. The agents take orders from customers and arrange for the pickup of freight or cargo for delivery to loading platforms. Cargo and freight agents may keep records of the properties of the cargo, such as its amount, type, weight, and dimensions. They keep a tally of missing items, record the conditions of damaged items, and document any excess supplies.

Cargo and freight agents arrange cargo according to its destination. They also determine the shipping rates and other charges that can sometimes apply to the freight. For imported or exported freight, they verify that the proper customs paperwork is in order. Cargo and freight agents often track shipments electronically, using bar codes, and answer customers' inquiries on the status of their shipments.

Employment

Cargo and freight agents held about 59,000 jobs in 2002. Most jobs were in transportation. Approximately 13 percent worked in the air transportation industry, and 9 percent worked in the truck transportation industry. Couriers employed another 14 percent. In addition, about 45 percent worked for firms engaged in support activities for the transportation industry.

Job Outlook

Employment of cargo and freight agents is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2012. Although cargo traffic is expected to grow faster than it has in the past, employment of cargo and freight agents will not quite keep pace, because of technological advances. For example, the increasing use of bar codes on cargo and freight allows agents and customers to track these shipments quickly over the Internet, rather than manually tracking their location. In addition, customs and insurance paperwork now can be completed over the Internet by customers, reducing the need for cargo and freight agents.

Despite these advances in technology that dampen job growth among cargo and freight agents, job openings will continue to arise, due to increases in buying over the Internet, which will result in more shipments. Jobs also will open up because of the increasing importance of same-day delivery, which expands the role of agents. In addition, many job openings will be created to replace cargo and freight agents who leave the occupation.

Related Occupations

Cargo and freight agents plan and coordinate shipments of cargo by airlines, trains, and trucks. They also arrange freight pickup with customers. Others who do similar work are couriers and messengers; shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks; weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers; truck drivers and driver/sales workers; and Postal Service workers.

Sources of Additional Information

Information about job opportunities may be obtained from local employers and local offices of the State employment service.



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(See the introduction to the section on material-recording, -scheduling, -dispatching, and -distributing occupations for information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings.)