

2022 NATA / NWACA Mechanical Employee Compensation Survey



In the summer of 2022, the Northwest Automotive Trades Association (NATA) and the Northwest Auto Care Alliance jointly conducted a survey of mechanical shops around the Pacific Northwest to measure employee compensation and benefits. About 85 shops completed the survey, providing compensation data for more than 370 employees.

Here are some of the highlights of this year's findings.

- **TECHNICIAN WAGES:** At first glance, it may appear technicians in Washington have higher wages than those in Oregon. An “expert A-level tech” in Oregon, for example, is averaging about \$68,000 in total annual income compared to an average of more than \$82,000 in Washington. But the average hourly rate they are paid is much more similar (around \$34-\$36 an hour). And average wages for B-level, C-level and apprentice techs are much more similar around the two states. As with previous wage surveys, there continues to be a significant range in annual wages for any type of technicians. There's a \$53,000 difference between the highest paid and lowest paid A-level technicians in the Portland area, for example, and an even wider spread (a \$70,000 difference) among A-level techs in Washington outside of the Seattle-Tacoma market.
- **ENTRY-LEVEL TECHNICIANS:** With more employers (such as Amazon) touting a \$15 per hour minimum wage, the industry appears to be keeping up, with apprentice technicians averaging at least that wage throughout the region.
- **SERVICE WRITER WAGES:** An NATA survey in 2018 found that average wages for service writers in the Portland market remained at about \$46,000, virtually unchanged from 2014. Since then, the average has jumped by more than 25 percent to \$58,121. That average is similar in other markets in the Northwest, although significantly higher (\$75,000) in the Seattle-Tacoma area. This average was likely skewed, however, by two service writers in that market earning more than \$120,000; with those two excluded, the average wage was \$63,181, much more in line with other parts of the region.
- **MEDICAL INSURANCE:** More than 90 percent of shops throughout the Northwest provide medical insurance for employees, and among those that do, the shops on average are paying more than 70 percent of the employee's monthly premium. About half of shops are paying 100 percent of the employee's premiums.

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- **RETIREMENT PROGRAMS:** The percentage of shops offering a retirement program for employees has continued to rise; in some markets, more than 70 percent of shops offer a retirement program. In some markets, 9 in 10 employers are making contributions to their employees' retirement plans.
- **PAID VACATION:** There was some shift upward in the amount of paid vacation offered by shops since a similar survey in 2018. A higher percentage of shops in the Portland market, for example, are offering two weeks of vacation (rather than just one) after two or three years with the company, and more after offering three weeks after four years. Elsewhere in Oregon, a higher percentage of shops are offering two weeks of vacation after one or two years, when compared to 2018.
- **'ON-THE-CLOCK' TRAINING:** Most shops throughout the region pay for training that employees attend, but shops in Washington seem to be more likely to pay the employee for the **time spent in training** – something that's required by labor law in both Oregon and Washington. (For more on these regulations, Oregon shops can [click here](#), and Washington shops can [click here](#).)
- **CREDENTIALS:** The technician shortage may also have prompted some shops to lower their hiring thresholds. In 2014, more than half of shops in a similar survey required technicians to be ASE-certified; now less than one-third do. More than 3 in 5, however, do offer higher wages for technicians with ASE certification.
- **WORK SCHEDULES:** This was the first time the survey asked about work schedules, and it appears that only a very small percentage of shops run multiple shifts. A 4-day workweek is somewhat more common but still at fewer than about 1 in 10 shops. Some industry observers are predicting 4-day schedules will be increasingly common.
- **SERVICE MANAGER :** Although the survey asked about service manager wages, too little data for this role was submitted (five or fewer employees in each geographic region). When all of the wage data submitted for 14 service managers across the region is tallied, it averages \$88,128 annually, with a salary (ranging between \$4,416 and \$8,000 monthly) being the most common payment method, though only slightly more common than some combination of hourly or salary pay with a commission structure.

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SURVEY TOPICS	GREATER PORTLAND AREA	ELSEWHERE IN OREGON	SEATTLE-TACOMA AREA	ELSEWHERE IN WASHINGTON
No. of participating businesses:	28	20	20	17
Avg. No. of production staff	3.6	5.35	4.8	3.9
Avg. No. of office/other staff	2.3	2.45	3.2	3.2
Avg. total fulltime employees	6.5	7.9	7.6	7.1
Percentage AAA approved	18%	20%	30%	41%
Percentage OR DEQ certified	54%	15%	n/a	n/a
Percentage ASE Blue Seal	29%	40%	25%	12%
Percentage Eco-Logical Biz	14%	10%	20%	n/a
Member of NATA	89%	65%	n/a	n/a
Member of NWACA	25%	30%	100%	94%
Insurance Offered				
▪ Medical	96%	95%	100%	94%
▪ Dental	46%	45%	50%	71%
▪ Vision	50%	50%	20%	41%
▪ Disability	18%	10%	40%	18%
▪ Life	25%	10%	45%	29%
▪ Supplemental, Other	29%	25%	25%	35%
▪ None	0	5%	0	6%
Of those who offer health insurance, average % of EMPLOYEE premiums paid by the company?	77% (50% pay 100% of premium)	71% (55% pay 100% of premium)	80% (40% pay 100% of premium)	80% (59% pay 100% of premium)
Retirement Plan Offered	71%	65%	55%	71%
Of those offering a retirement plan, % that make company contributions to the plan	90%	85%	63%	92%
Most common method of determining employer contribution to retirement	3% of pay	3% of pay	3% of pay	3% of pay

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Percentage offering:				
▪ ASE Testing Fees	79%	85%	85%	82%
▪ Paid Bereavement Leave	32%	15%	50%	12%
▪ Educ/Train (tuition/class fees)	79%	90%	95%	100%
▪ Educ/Train (wages during training)	39%	55%	90%	76%
▪ Educ/Train (travel if 25+ miles away)	46%	55%	70%	53%
▪ Emp. Assistance Program	0	5%	10%	0
▪ Holiday Pay	86%	85%	100%	100%
▪ Jury Duty	18%	20%	30%	6%
▪ Option for Unpaid Leave	39%	45%	30%	65%
▪ Section 125i Plan	0	10%	10%	12%
▪ Paid Sick Leave	61%	50%	100%	71%
▪ Tools	21%	5%	20%	35%
▪ Uniforms	93%	100%	100%	100%
▪ Annual Bonus	68%	50%	70%	59%
▪ Other Bonus	43%	55%	55%	47%
▪ Weekly Meal	32%	0	45%	18%
▪ Referral Bonus (for new hires)	25%	15%	30%	24%
▪ Signing Bonus	11%	10%	35%	24%
▪ Parts at/near cost for pers. use	89%	80%	75%	94%
% that require technicians to be ASE certified	32%	20%	25%	24%
% that pays higher wages for those with certifications	68%	75%	85%	59%
A 4-day workweek is a common practice	11%	5%	0	6%
Multiple shifts of techs is a common practice	4%	0	0	0

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SURVEY TOPICS	GREATER PORTLAND AREA	ELSEWHERE IN OREGON	SEATTLE-TACOMA AREA	ELSEWHERE IN WASHINGTON
Most common amount of paid vacation after...				
▪ 1 Year	1 week (82%)	1 week (65%) (15% offer 2 weeks)	1 week (90%)	1 week (76%)
▪ 2 Years	2 weeks (68%) (29% offer 1 week)	2 weeks (45%) (35% offer 1 week)	2 weeks (55%) (40% offer 1 week)	2 weeks (59%) 35% offer 1 week)
▪ 3 Years	2 weeks (79%)	2 weeks (55%) (30% offer 1 week)	2 weeks (70%)	2 weeks (59%) (12% offer 3 weeks)
▪ 4 Years	2 weeks (68%) (14% offer 3 weeks)	2 weeks (55%) (25% offer 1 week)	2 weeks (70%) (10% offer 3 weeks)	2 weeks (59%) (12% offer 3 weeks)
▪ 5 Years	2 weeks (43%) (39% offer 3 weeks)	2 weeks (60%) (20% offer 3 weeks)	3 weeks (50%) (40% offer 2 weeks)	2 weeks (76%) (12% offer 3 weeks)
▪ 6+ Years	3 weeks (50%) (39% offer 2 weeks)	2 weeks (60%) (20% offer 3 weeks)	3 weeks (50%) (40% offer 2 weeks)	2 weeks (59%) (18% offer 3 weeks)

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SURVEY TOPICS	GREATER PORTLAND AREA	ELSEWHERE IN OREGON	SEATTLE-TACOMA AREA	ELSEWHERE IN WASHINGTON
<i>The first number in each category is the number of full-time employees in that job category for which compensation data was submitted.</i>				
<u>Expert (A-level) Tech</u>	42	25	45	27
▪ Average Total Annual Compensation	\$67,893	\$67,855	\$84,936	\$82,926
▪ High / Low Total Annual Compensation	\$95,000 / \$41,832	\$100,000 / \$36,000	\$106,600 / \$46,000	\$130,000 / \$60,000
▪ Most Common Pay Structure(s)	\$31-\$40 hourly (avg. = \$33.68)	\$23-\$49 per flat rate hour (avg. = \$28.12)	\$23-\$38 hourly (avg. = \$36.19)	\$30-\$45 hourly (avg. = \$34.86)
<u>Advanced (B-level) Tech</u>	19	15	18	11
▪ Average Total Annual Compensation	\$57,944	\$57,107	\$63,872	\$61,642
▪ High / Low Total Annual Compensation	\$72,000 / \$41,600	\$85,000 / \$37,500	\$100,000 / \$44,000	\$86,000 / \$47,500
▪ Most Common Pay Structure(s)	\$22 - \$36 hourly (avg. = \$28.66)	\$28-\$35 per flat rate hour (avg. = \$30)	\$22-\$32 hourly (avg. = \$28.46)	varies
<u>Intermediate (C-level) Tech</u>	13	10	8	10
▪ Average Total Annual Compensation	\$49,466	\$40,285	\$46,720	\$46,111
▪ High / Low Total Annual Compensation	\$63,000 / \$36,000	\$50,000 / \$36,000	\$55,000 / \$34,000	\$76,000 / \$40,000
▪ Most Common Pay Structure(s)	\$18-\$25 hourly (avg. = \$21.50)	\$17-\$55 hourly (avg. = \$19.66)	\$17-\$25 hourly (avg. = \$23)	\$20-\$29 hourly (avg. = \$23.85)
<u>Apprentice Technician</u>	7	10	11	5
▪ Average Total Annual Compensation	\$36,916	\$33,200	\$41,216	\$39,000
▪ High / Low Total Annual Compensation	\$50,000 / \$30,000	\$48,000 / \$25,000	\$68,500 / \$30,000	\$40,000 / 36,000
▪ Most Common Pay Structure(s)	\$15-\$25 hourly (avg. = \$18.62)	\$13-\$22 hourly (avg. = \$16.40)	\$15-\$27 hourly (avg. = \$21.35)	\$18-\$20 hourly (avg. = \$19.50)

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Service Writer / Advisor	26	15	23	18
▪ Average Total Annual Compensation	\$58,121	\$56,446	\$75,000	\$58,428
▪ High / Low Total Annual Compensation	\$90,000 / \$39,000	\$76,000 / \$43,000	\$135,000 / \$41,600	\$88,000 / \$40,000
▪ Most Common Pay Structure(s)	\$19.50 - \$30 hourly (avg. = \$23.59)	Salary/Hourly with commission	Salary/Hourly with commission	\$20-\$30 hourly (avg. = \$24.25)