

# Understanding the Local Labor Market

## Promising Career Pathways in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County

### Focus: Refrigeration, Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (RHVAC) Mechanics and Installers

*Understanding the Local Labor Market: Promising Career Pathways in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County* is intended as a useful resource for career counselors and other professionals responsible for helping jobseekers make informed decisions about employment and training. Featured occupations are selected on the basis of vacancies, wages and benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

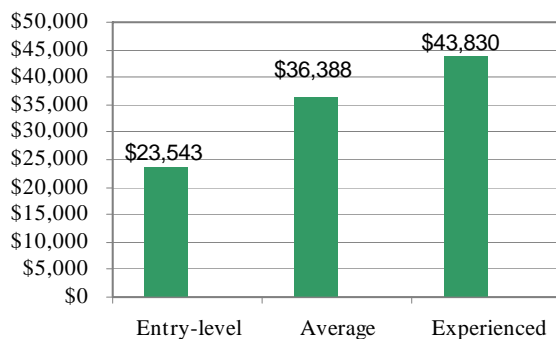
#### What do RHVAC mechanics and installers do?

- Refrigeration, heating, ventilation and air conditioning mechanics and installers install, maintain, and repair systems that control the temperature, humidity, and air quality in buildings as well as refrigeration systems for preserving food and other perishable items.
- These occupations may also be known as: service technicians; air conditioning technicians; HVAC specialists, technicians or installers.

#### What are wages, benefits, and work conditions for RHVAC mechanics and installers?

- Refrigeration, heating, ventilation and air conditioning mechanics and installers generally work for heating and cooling contractors, fuel dealers or are self-employed.
- Average annual wages for these positions in Allegheny County are \$37,068. They usually require a 40-hour work week and overtime may be required during peak seasons (winter and summer). Evening and weekend shifts may also be required. Benefits are likely for experienced technicians. Job sites vary and may be uncomfortable due to temperature and equipment location. Safety is key as some jobs may risk injury.

**Annual Wages for  
RHVAC Technicians  
Allegheny County**



Source: PA Dept. of Labor & Industry, Center for Workforce Information & Analysis ([www.paworkstats.state.pa.us](http://www.paworkstats.state.pa.us))

#### What do RHVAC mechanics and installers like about their jobs?

- Refrigeration, heating, ventilation and air conditioning mechanics and installers enjoy working with tools and mechanical systems.
- They enjoy interacting with clients at job sites.
- Refrigeration, heating, ventilation and air conditioning technicians who work at different sites each day enjoy the new variety that accompanies shifting work sites.
- Competent technicians enjoy job security because of the high demand for these positions in the local economy.
- Self-employment is not uncommon for these positions and those who own their own business enjoy the freedom of being their own boss.

#### What are advancement opportunities and related occupations?

- Refrigeration, heating, ventilation and air conditioning technicians may advance by becoming supervisors or managers, entering into related sales or marketing positions, or starting their own contracting businesses.
- Related occupations include: boilermakers; electrical appliance servicers; electricians; sheet metal workers; duct installers; plumbers; pipefitters; and steamfitters.

#### How many RHVAC mechanics and installers openings are there?

- Local demand for refrigeration, heating, ventilation and air conditioning mechanics and installers is strong and expected to grow.
- The PA Department of Labor and Industry estimates that there are approximately 1,400 refrigeration, heating, ventilation and air conditioning mechanics and installers working in Allegheny County. Allegheny County expects to add approximately 160 of these jobs by 2010.
- As concern for the environment and energy conservation continues to increase as a priority, demand for heating, air conditioning and refrigeration mechanics and installers should increase as old systems are replaced with more efficient systems.
- Over 600 local RHVAC and related jobs were posted on the Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink website ([careerlink-pittsburgh.com](http://careerlink-pittsburgh.com)) between January 2005 and December 2005.

## FOCUS: Refrigeration, Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (RHVAC) Mechanics and Installers

### How can I become an RHVAC mechanic and installer?

- A high school diploma or equivalent is required for these positions.
- Courses in math, mechanical drawing, physics, chemistry, electronics, blue print reading and computers provide background skills needed for these positions. Knowledge of plumbing or electrical work is also needed.
- The ability to read and interpret manuals, write service reports and use computers is critical.
- While many refrigeration, heating, ventilation and air conditioning mechanics and installers are trained on-the-job, a degree from a technical school or apprenticeship program is generally preferred.
- Technical degrees (which take anywhere from 6-months to 2 years to complete) may be obtained from technical schools, trade schools, junior colleges, community colleges (see list right). Apprenticeship programs combine on-the-job training with classroom instruction.
- These positions require ongoing learning to keep current with technology changes. Certifications that show expertise gained in specific areas can help keep skills current and aid with advancement.
- Safety training is critical especially for those who work with refrigerants.
- A valid drivers license is needed for most of these jobs and employers may require criminal background and drug tests prior to hire.
- A friendly demeanor when working with customers needed.

### How do I find out about RHVAC mechanics and installers jobs?

- **Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink** has job postings for these positions (contact 1-866-317-JOBS or visit [www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com](http://www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com) to learn more).
- Many employers use local newspapers or online search engines to advertise openings.

### Where can I get training locally?

**Beattie Technical School, 412-366-2800, [www.beattietech.com](http://www.beattietech.com)**  
Offers a Heating/Ventilating/Air-Conditioning program for both youth and adults.

**CCAC Neville Tech Campus, 412-469-4900, [www.ccac.edu](http://www.ccac.edu)**  
Offers an associate degree and a certificate heating and air conditioning program.

**Dean Institute of Technology, 412-531-4433, [www.deantech.edu](http://www.deantech.edu)**  
Offers a 15-month air conditioning and refrigeration technology associate degree program that prepares for entry-level positions in this field and offers a diploma program in the evenings for individuals already working in the field.

**Forbes Road Career and Technology Center, 412-373-8100, [www.forbesroad.com](http://www.forbesroad.com)**

Offers a Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning program that provides classroom and practical experience for both youth and adults.

**Parkway West Career Technology Center, 412-923-1772**  
Allows students in the construction technology cluster to specialize in air conditioning / heating.

**Steamfitters Mechanic Equipment Service Apprenticeship Training Program , 412-381-1133, [www.ua449.com](http://www.ua449.com)**  
Offers a five-year apprenticeship program that prepares for HVAC positions.

**Steel Center Area Vocational Technical School, 412-469-3200, [www.scavts.net](http://www.scavts.net)**  
Offers an HVAC certificate program for secondary students only.

**Triangle Tech, 724-832-1050, [www.triangle-tech.edu](http://www.triangle-tech.edu)**  
Offers an RHVAC Mechanic and Technology associate in specialized technology degree program.

### Can I get help paying for training?

- Limited training funds may be available through **Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink**
- Financial aid may be available for some local training programs. The Steamfitters apprenticeship program is free and enables participants to earn while they learn.

### Remember...

Labor markets are affected by economic, social, and institutional factors that are difficult to predict. No one can forecast perfectly how many jobs will be available, or whether there will be too many or too few workers to fill those jobs. The reality is that employment is never a guarantee, even for individuals who pursue training in demand occupations.

The Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board (TRWIB) is charged with promoting a coordinated and accountable employment and training system for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Responsibilities include setting and monitoring local performance standards, chartering CareerLink comprehensive and community centers that provide a range of services to jobseekers and employers, and certifying qualified training providers. Board members are appointed by Mayor Bob O'Connor (City of Pittsburgh) and Chief Executive Dan Onorato (Allegheny County).

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