

ENERGY CAREER CORNER: Careers in Petroleum–Offshore Oil Rigs

There are more than 5,000 oil and gas drilling companies in the world; most are located in the oil-bearing regions of North America, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Nigeria and Venezuela. As the world's demand for oil increases, career opportunities in the oil industry expand.

Working aboard an oil rig in the ocean is hard work. If the rig is far from the coast, workers live on the rig (where the facilities may equal those of a hotel), or on ships anchored nearby. A worker on a rig spends a great deal of time away from family and friends, but there are some great benefits to working on an offshore rig—all food, housing, laundry, and travel expenses are paid for by the employer and most personnel work a 14/14 or 14/21 day rotation. This means they work on the rig for 14 days (usually 12 hours a day), then have 14 or 21 days off.

Most employment opportunities in the oil industry are in entry-level positions. There is often room for advancement for hard-working, dependable employees who are able to learn skills on the job or who are able to work with computers. Since operations on an offshore rig can be more challenging than those on land, most offshore entry-level positions require experience working on land. When workers have mastered entry-level positions on rigs, they may have the opportunity to progress to positions with more responsibility or to more difficult tasks. To advance, an employee may also need classroom training, on-the-job training, job shadowing, mentoring, or coaching. Two entry-level positions on an offshore oil rig are roustabout and roughneck.

A **roustabout** is a general laborer who completes general rig maintenance, works on construction, and helps unload supplies from support ships. The work often requires working outdoors in all types of weather. To be successful, physical stamina is important because long periods of standing, lifting heavy objects, and climbing may all be part of a normal day's work. The salary ranges from \$310-\$345 per day, or \$42,000 to \$46,000 per year.

A **roughneck**, also known as a rotary-driller helper, is a drill deck worker. This job is a promotion from roustabout. The job of a roughneck is to carry out specific tasks during the drilling operation, such as guiding pipes to well openings and connecting pipe joints. This job requires a lot of hard, physical labor while working on a team. The job is ideal for people with experience and knowledge working with mechanics and welding. A roughneck can earn up to \$355 per day, or \$47,500 per year.

Additional members of a drilling crew include derrick operators, rotary-rig engine operators, and rotary drillers. Drilling superintendents oversee the drilling crews, while petroleum engineers plan and supervise the operation and maintenance of the drillsite. An offshore rig may also need ship captains, electricians, mechanics and engineers.

For more information on careers in the petroleum industry, go to:

American Association of Petroleum Geologists

www.aapg.org

American Geologic Institute

www.agiweb.org

Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

Oil Rig Jobs

www.oil-rig-jobs.com

Society of Petroleum Engineers

www.spe.org

