
Coin, Vending, and Amusement Machine Servicers and Repairers

(O*NET 49-9091.00)

Significant Points

- Most workers in this occupation learn their skills on the job.
- Opportunities should be especially good for people with some knowledge of electronics.

Nature of the Work

Coin, vending, and amusement machines give out change, test our gaming skills, and dispense refreshments nearly everywhere we turn. Coin, vending, and amusement machine servicers and repairers install, service, and stock such machines and keep them in good working order.

Occupations in this industry are classified by the type of machine they work on and whether they specialize in servicing or repairing the machines. *Vending machine servicers*, often called route drivers, visit machines that dispense soft drinks, candy and snacks, and other items. They collect money from the coin and cash-operated machines, restock merchandise, and change labels to indicate new selections. They also keep the machines clean and appealing.

Vending machine repairers, often called mechanics or technicians, make sure that the machines operate correctly. On the relatively simple gravity-operated machines, repairers check the keypads, motors, and merchandise chutes. When checking complicated electrical and electronic machines, such as beverage dispensers, they check to see that the machines mix drinks properly and that the refrigeration and heating units work correctly. If the machines are not in good working order, the mechanics repair them. When installing machines, vending machine repairers make the necessary water and electrical connections and check them for proper operation.

Amusement machine servicers and repairers work on jukeboxes, video games, pinball machines, and slot machines. They update selections, repair or replace malfunctioning parts, and rebuild existing equipment.

Vending machine servicers and repairers employed by small companies may both fill and fix machines on a regular basis. These combination servicers-repairers stock machines, collect money, fill coin and currency changers, and repair machines when necessary.

If a machine breaks down, vending and amusement machine repairers inspect it for obvious problems, such as loose electrical wires, malfunctions of the coin mechanism or bill validator, and leaks. When servicing electronic machines, repairers test them with hand-held diagnostic computers that determine the extent and location of any problem. Repairers may only have to replace a circuit board or other component to fix the problem. However, if the problem cannot be readily located, these workers refer to technical manuals and wiring diagrams and use testing devices, such as electrical circuit testers, to find defective parts. Repairers decide whether they must replace a part and whether they can fix the malfunction onsite or whether they have to send the machine to the repair shop.

In the repair shop, vending and amusement machine repairers use power tools, such as grinding wheels, saws, and drills, as well as voltmeters, ohmmeters, oscilloscopes, and other testing equipment. They also use ordinary repair tools, such as screwdrivers, pliers, and wrenches.

Preventive maintenance—avoiding trouble before it starts—is a major job of repairers. For example, they periodically clean refrigeration condensers, lubricate mechanical parts, and adjust machines so that they perform properly. Servicers and repairers also do some paperwork, such as filing reports, preparing repair cost estimates, ordering parts, and keeping daily records of merchandise distributed and money collected. However, new machines with computerized inventory controls reduce the paperwork that a servicer must complete.

Work environment. Repairers generally work a total of 40 hours a week. However, vending and amusement machines operate around the clock, so repairers may be on call to work at night and on weekends and holidays.

Some vending and amusement machine repairers work primarily in company repair shops that generally are quiet, well lighted, and have adequate workspace. Others may spend substantial time on the road, visiting machines wherever they have been placed. Repair work is relatively safe, although servicers and repairers must take care to avoid hazards such as electrical shocks and cuts from sharp tools and other metal objects.



Coin, vending, and amusement machine repairers may make repairs onsite or at their workshop.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

| Occupational Title | SOC Code | Employment, 2006 | Projected employment, 2016 | Change, 2006-16 | |
|--|----------|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---------|
| | | | | Number | Percent |
| Coin, vending, and amusement machine servicers and repairers | 49-9091 | 48,000 | 46,000 | -1,400 | -3 |

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Most workers learn their skills on the job. Employers normally hire high school graduates, and give preference to those with high school or vocational school courses in electronics, refrigeration, and machine repair.

Education and training. Electronics have become more prevalent in vending and amusement machines. While employers only require workers to have graduated high school, they give preference to those who have completed programs in basic electronics at vocational high schools and junior colleges. Postsecondary programs in electronics can last 1 to 2 years.

Once hired, new workers are trained informally on the job to fill and fix machines by observing, working with, and receiving instruction from experienced repairers. Beginners start training with simple jobs, such as cleaning or stocking machines. They then learn to rebuild machines by removing defective parts and repairing, adjusting, and testing the machines. Next, they accompany an experienced repairer on service calls and, finally, make visits on their own. This learning process takes from 6 months to 2 years, depending on the individual's abilities, previous education, types of machines serviced, and quality of instruction.

To learn about new machines, repairers and servicers sometimes attend training sessions sponsored by manufacturers and distributors. Both trainees and experienced workers sometimes take evening courses in basic electricity, electronics, microwave ovens, refrigeration, and other related subjects to learn about new techniques and equipment.

Other qualifications. Employers usually require applicants to demonstrate mechanical ability, either through related work experience or by scoring well on mechanical-aptitude tests. Because coin, vending, and amusement machine servicers and repairers sometimes handle thousands of dollars in merchandise and cash, employers try to hire persons who are trustworthy and have no criminal record. Also, the ability to deal tactfully with people is important because servicers and repairers play a significant role in relaying customers' requests and concerns. A driver's license and a good driving record are essential for most vending and amusement machine servicer and repairer jobs, and some employers require their servicers to be bonded.

Certification and advancement. The National Automatic Merchandising Association has two self-study technician training programs, one for vending machine repairers and another for machine servicers. Self-study manuals give instruction in subjects such as customer relations, safety, electronics, and reading schematics. Upon completion of the program, repairers must pass a written test to become certified as a technician or journeyman. Certified and other skilled servicers

and repairers may be promoted to supervisory jobs or go into business for themselves.

Employment

Coin, vending, and amusement machine servicers and repairers held about 48,000 jobs in 2006. Of these workers, 18 percent were self-employed. Twenty-four percent of these workers were employed by vending machine operators that sell food and other items through machines. Others worked for beverage manufacturing or wholesale companies that have their own machines and for amusement, gambling, and recreation establishments that own video games, jukeboxes, slot machines, and similar types of amusement equipment.

Job Outlook

Employment of coin, vending, and amusement machine servicers and repairers is expected to decline moderately through the year 2016. Opportunities for these workers, however, should be good for those with the proper training or related experience.

Employment change. Employment of coin, vending, and amusement machine services and repairers is expected to decrease by 3 percent between 2006. However, the number of vending machines available to the public is expected to increase. Establishments that are likely to install additional vending machines include industrial plants, hospitals, stores, schools and prisons in order to meet the public demand for inexpensive snacks and other food items. Growth of casino slot machines and coin-operated lottery ticket machines will increase the total number of amusement machines as well.

Despite the expected increase in the number of vending and amusement machines in use, improved technology in newer machines will cause a moderate decline in employment because these machines require less maintenance and need restocking less often. Many will contain computers that record sales and inventory data, reducing the amount of time-consuming paperwork that otherwise would have to be filled out. In addition, some new machines use wireless data transmitters to signal the vending machine company when the machine needs restocking or repairing. This allows servicers and repairers to be dispatched only when needed, instead of having to check each machine on a regular schedule.

Job prospects. Job opportunities should be good for those with training in a related electronic repair field, and who are willing to travel and work at times other than regular business hours. Opportunities will be limited for those with just a high school degree and no training in electronics repair. Job openings will also arise from the need to replace experienced repairers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force.

Earnings

Median hourly earnings of coin, vending, and amusement machine servicers and repairers were \$13.80 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$10.84 and \$17.23 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$8.77 an hour, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$21.35 an hour. Median hourly earnings were \$12.94 in vending machine operators, the industry employing the largest number of coin, vending, and amusement machine servicers and repairers in May 2006.

Typically, workers who service and repair slot machines in States with some form of legalized gaming have the highest wages. Overtime work usually commands a premium on wages, and some union contracts stipulate higher pay for night work and for emergency repair jobs on weekends and holidays than for regular hours. Some of these workers are members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters: 17 percent of vending machine repairers and servicers belonged to a union in 2006, as compared with 12 percent for all occupations.

Related Occupations

Other workers who repair equipment with electrical and electronic components include electrical and electronics installers and repairers; electronic home entertainment equipment installers and repairers; heating, air-conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers; and home appliance repairers.

Sources of Additional Information

Information on job opportunities in this field can be obtained from local vending machine firms and local offices of your State employment service.

For general information on vending machine servicing and repair, contact:

➤ National Automatic Merchandising Association, 20 N. Wacker Dr., Suite 3500, Chicago, IL 60606.

Internet: <http://www.vending.org>

➤ Vending Times, 1375 Broadway, New York, NY 10018.