

Cargo and Freight Agents

(O*NET 43-5011.00)

Significant Points

- Cargo and freight agents need no more than a high school diploma and learn their duties informally on the job.
- Faster than average employment growth is expected.

Nature of the Work

Cargo and freight agents arrange for and track incoming and outgoing shipments in airline, train, or trucking terminals or on shipping docks. They expedite shipments by determining the route that shipments will take and by preparing all necessary documents. Agents take orders from customers and arrange for the pickup of freight or cargo and its delivery to loading platforms. Cargo and freight agents may keep records of the cargo, including its amount, type, weight, dimensions, destination, and time of shipment. They keep a tally of missing items and record the condition of damaged items.

Cargo and freight agents arrange cargo according to its destination. They also determine any shipping rates and other charges that usually apply to 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' questions about the status of their shipments.

Work environment. Cargo and freight agents work in a wide variety of businesses, institutions, and industries. Some work in warehouses, stockrooms, or shipping and receiving rooms that may not be temperature controlled. Others may spend time in cold storage rooms or outside on loading platforms, where they are exposed to the weather.



Cargo and freight agents determine the route that shipments will take and prepare all necessary documents.

Most jobs for cargo and freight agents involve frequent standing, bending, walking, and stretching. Some lifting and carrying of small items may be involved. Although automated devices have lessened the physical demands of this occupation, not every employer has these devices. The work still can be strenuous, even though mechanical material-handling equipment is used to move heavy items.

The typical workweek is Monday through Friday. However, evening and weekend hours are common in jobs involving large shipments.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Cargo and freight agents need no more than a high school diploma and learn their duties informally on the job.

Education and training. Many jobs are entry level and require only a high school diploma. Cargo and freight agents undergo informal on-the-job training. They start out by checking items to be shipped, attaching labels to them, and making sure that addresses are correct. As this occupation becomes more automated, workers may need longer periods of training to master the use of equipment.

Other qualifications. Employers prefer to hire people who can use computers. Typing, filing, recordkeeping, and other clerical skills also are important.

Advancement. Advancement opportunities for cargo and freight agents are usually limited, but some agents may become team leaders or use their hands-on experience to switch to other clerical occupations in the businesses where they work.

Employment

Cargo and freight agents held about 86,000 jobs in 2006. Most agents were employed in transportation. Approximately 44 percent worked for firms engaged in support activities for the transportation industry, 23 percent were in the air transportation industry, 9 percent worked for courier businesses, and 7 percent were in the truck transportation industry.

Job Outlook

Employment is expected to grow faster than average.

Employment change. Employment of cargo and freight agents is expected to increase by 16 percent during the 2006-16 decade, faster than the average for all occupations. A growing number of agents will be needed to handle the increasing number of shipments resulting from increases in cargo traffic. Additional demand will stem from the growing popularity of online shopping and same-day delivery.

Job prospects. In addition to new job growth, openings will be created by the need to replace cargo and freight agents who leave the occupation.

Earnings

Median annual earnings of cargo and freight agents in May 2006 were \$37,110. The middle 50 percent earned between \$27,750 and \$46,440. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$22,470, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$57,440. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of cargo and freight agents in May 2006 were:

Scheduled air transportation	\$38,340
Freight transportation arrangement.....	37,130
Couriers.....	36,750
General freight trucking.....	34,010
Support activities for air transportation	23,770

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Cargo and freight agents	43-5011	86,000	100,000	14,000	16

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*.

These workers usually receive the same benefits as most other workers. If uniforms are required, employers generally provide them or offer an allowance to purchase them.

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, recordkeeping; 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.