



# Mechanical Contractors Association of Canada



## MECHANICAL CONTRACTING CAREERS

### SHEET METAL

Do you like working with your hands and machines? Are you physically fit? Do you prefer working alone? Are you self-motivated and creative? Would you enjoy using precision tools? Could you create a three-dimensional drawing? Then you could become a Sheet Metal Worker!

#### Also known as

- Apprentice Sheet Metal Worker
- Sheet Metal Fabricator
- Sheet Metal Mechanic
- Tinsmith

#### What the work is like

Sheet metal workers fabricate, assemble, install and repair sheet metal products – from furnaces and ventilating systems to all sheet metal products used in the construction industry.

They are employed by sheet metal, air-conditioning, heating and roofing contractors, or they can be self-employed.

Sheet metal workers work in all four construction sectors: New Home Building and Renovation, Heavy Industrial, Institutional and Commercial, and Civil Engineering.

#### Your duties

Sheet metal workers may specialize in on-site installation or shop manufacture of sheet metal products, or in servicing and maintenance of installed equipment and systems.

Depending on your speciality, your duties may include the following:

- building and installing products such as eaves troughs, air and heat ducts, roof decking and sheet metal buildings
- laying out, measuring and marking sheet metal
- working with computerized equipment to cut, bend or straighten sheet metal
- welding sheet metal parts
- polishing seams, joints and rough surfaces
- reading and interpreting sketches and work specifications

## **Work conditions**

The standard work week for sheet metal workers is 40 hours (8 hours a day, 5 days a week). As with many careers in construction, there are peak periods that will require you to work overtime. The number of additional hours you work each week depends on the construction sector and region you work in, and will vary from one job to the next.

As a Sheet Metal Worker, you may work indoors or outdoors, on construction sites or in a shop. You may work independently, but may also collaborate with other construction professionals. The job can be physically demanding – you may work at considerable heights and have to lift heavy materials and equipment.

As with all careers in the construction industry, safety is the top priority. Sheet metal workers are trained to work safely and wear special equipment to protect themselves from injury.

## **Essential Skills**

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has identified nine Essential Skills that are necessary to succeed in the workplace. These skills provide the foundation for learning all other skills and apply to most construction careers. Best of all, you can learn and improve on these skills in school, on the job and during your everyday life.

The most important Essential Skills for sheet metal workers are the following:

- Document Use – reading and interpreting documents to extract information
- Numeracy – working with numbers to perform calculations
- Problem Solving – coming up with solutions to challenges
- Working with Others – interacting with co-workers to get the job done

[Click here](#) to see how these skills are applied on the job.

## **Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship is one way of starting out in the construction industry. It involves both classroom studies and on-the-job training under the supervision of a certified Sheet Metal Worker, called a journeyman.

As an apprentice, you earn while you learn and are paid by the hour while working on the job site. Wages start at about 50% of a journeyman's hourly rate and increase during your apprenticeship until you reach the journeyman rate.

## **Entering an apprenticeship program**

Requirements for sheet metal worker apprenticeship programs vary across Canada. In most provinces and territories, you must be at least 18 years old and have a Grade 12 education or equivalent to enter the program. You may find it helpful to have courses in geometry and math.

Some provinces and territories offer secondary school apprenticeship programs that allow high school students to work towards a career as a Sheet Metal Worker.

For more information, check out the [Apprenticeship](#) section.

## Program length

Apprenticeship training programs for sheet metal workers vary across Canada, but generally involve four 12-month periods, including at least 5,700 hours of on-the-job training, four 10-week blocks of technical training and a final certificate exam.

Related work experience or completion of a sheet metal worker program at a college or technical institute can reduce the time required to complete your apprenticeship.

## Certification

Certification is required in Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Quebec. It is available but voluntary in all other provinces and territories. Even where certification is voluntary, it is still recommended. Certification tells employers and other workers that you are a skilled professional. It also helps you get jobs.

To be certified as a Sheet Metal Worker, you usually need to complete a four-year apprenticeship program. Once you successfully complete the required on-the-job training, technical training and exams, you are awarded a journey person certificate.

You may be eligible for certification in some provinces and territories if you have more than four years of on-the-job experience and some high school, college or industry courses for sheet metal workers.

As a certified Sheet Metal Worker, you may attempt the Interprovincial Exam to qualify for the Interprovincial Standards' Red Seal. With a Red Seal, you can work as a Sheet Metal Worker anywhere in Canada.

To keep your skills current, you have to keep up with new technological developments by reading and talking with other sheet metal workers.

## Where to study in Canada

In addition to the Canadian schools listed below, many employer and labour organizations offer training.

### Alberta

[Northern Alberta Institute of Technology](#)  
[Southern Alberta Institute of Technology](#)

### British Columbia

[British Columbia Institute of Technology](#)  
[Camosun College](#)  
[Sheet Metal Workers Training Centre](#)

### Manitoba

[Red River College](#)

### New Brunswick

[New Brunswick Community College](#)

### Ontario

[Algonquin College](#)  
[Cambrian College](#)  
[Fanshawe College](#)  
[George Brown College](#)  
[Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology](#)

### Quebec

[Centre de formation des métiers de l'acier](#)

### Saskatchewan

[Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology](#)

## Specialty programs

In addition to the schools listed above, new Canadians and women can enrol in one of the following specialty programs:

For new Canadians with experience as sheet metal workers, [NorQuest College](#) offers a program called Transitions to Technical and Trades Careers.

For women, [Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology](#) offers an integrated program called Women in Skilled Trades.

## Salary ranges

Sheet Metal Worker hourly wages vary depending on the contract, the company, collective agreements, and local and national economic conditions. Typical hourly wage ranges for sheet metal workers (based on national or regional averages) are as follows:

### Junior apprentices

Region	Typical hourly rate
National average	\$12-\$17
Atlantic Canada	\$10-\$12
Ontario and Quebec	\$15-\$17
Western Canada	\$14-\$29

Based on national averages, junior apprentices can earn annual salaries ranging from \$25,000 to \$35,000 per year, not including overtime.

### Journeypersons

Region	Typical hourly rate
National average	\$21-\$26
Atlantic Canada	\$19-\$22
Ontario and Quebec	\$23-\$26
Western Canada	\$21-\$51

Based on national averages, journeypersons can earn annual salaries ranging from \$44,000 to \$54,000 per year, not including overtime.

### Highly experienced journeypersons

Region	Typical hourly rate
National average	\$27-\$34
Atlantic Canada	\$28-\$30
Ontario and Quebec	\$32-\$34
Western Canada	\$27-\$55

Based on national averages, highly experienced journeypersons can earn annual salaries ranging from \$56,000 to \$71,000 per year, not including overtime.

Construction work can involve overtime, so your total annual salary will vary depending on the number of overtime hours you work.

In addition to the hourly rate, many construction workers receive statutory holiday and vacation pay. Depending on the contract, you may also receive benefits such as group insurance for health, dental, and vision care, as well as retirement packages and training benefits up to 30% of your hourly rate. If you are self-employed, it is up to you to arrange your own benefits.

### **Building your career**

With experience and additional training, you can specialize in design and layout work or in estimating the cost of installations. You can also advance to supervisory positions, or start your own sheet metal business.

As with most careers in the construction industry, your skills are portable. If you want to move, you can take your skills with you.