

## Self-Assessment

### Will I enjoy railway working conditions?

Railway jobs are lifelong careers with opportunities to advance and network in the railway industry, spanning the country, the continent, and the world. Jobs include: Conductor, Track Maintainer, Rail Car Mechanic, Locomotive Mechanic, Rail Traffic Controller, Signal Maintainer, and Yardmaster.

### Railway employers include:

- Class 1 Railways [CN, CP, VIA, BNSF]: These span the North American continent
- Shortline Railways [approximately 50 in Canada]: These are large, seniority-based, and unionized
- Industrial Railways [approximately 170 in BC, 300 in AB, etc.]: These include industries with railway tracks or yards on their property

### Class 1 and Shortline Railways - Working conditions:

- Standard salary pay-scale increases with experience. Expect overtime with most types of jobs [more overtime = higher salary]. For example, conductors' salaries start at \$45,000 - \$65,000 per year, with guaranteed pay on "spare board". With a few years of experience, conductors can expect \$80,000 or more
- For the first few years, work may be 24/7 on-call shift work, mostly on spare board, with two hours' notice. Expect long, odd hours, including weekends and statutory holidays
- Work can be in railway yards or on the road between yards. Depending on the location, you might work away from home for up to two days at a time
- Work includes day or night shifts, in shops or outdoors, in all types of weather
- Work can be physically demanding: you must be able to lift up to 85 lbs., walk on uneven terrain; some jobs [i.e. conductors] are performed while the train is moving
- You need to be safety-oriented, and pay close attention to your surroundings and the specific details of your job
- Work is conducted on or around large, heavy, moving and / or stationary equipment
- You will work independently, with little or no supervision, or in small teams
- You will require additional specialized in-house training

### Industrial Railways working conditions:

- Work takes place in yards, not on the road. Some jobs involve only railway work and others have a combination of railway work and duties specific to the industry owning the yard
- Examples of Industrial Railways include grain elevators, ports / dockyards, mines, oil / gas facilities, railway contractors, railway suppliers, and regional carriers

### Class 1 and Shortline Railways - Do I have the required skills to succeed?

- Excellent verbal and written communication skills are required to convey accurate information
- Commitment to customer service and safe work practices

- Knowledge of proper hand signals, as well as a clear voice, enunciation, and proper protocols on radio equipment. It is important to note that, for some jobs, the use of radio communication is more frequent than face-to-face communication
- Skills such as conflict resolution, coaching, and the ability to work with small teams of two to three people or with different co-workers on every shift
- The ability to identify and document defects, and make necessary repairs. Mechanical and technical aptitudes to operate and carry out repairs on freight equipment and track appliances
- The ability to carry out inspections and tests in accordance to railway rules and specifications
- To use and interpret technical documentation, railway terminology, and railway rules and regulations
- Basic computer skills to log data, access company information, self-training, etc.

**For some Industrial Railways, not all of the above skills will be required**

## **Class 1 and Shortline Railways – What are the requirements for employment?**

- A valid class 5 driver's licence and reliable transportation would be assets, as most employees are required to arrive at the home terminal within a two-hour call window. Some employers may require employees to operate company vehicles
- You may be required to undergo a criminal record check. Applicants should ensure that they have the ability to pass the criminal record check, or to obtain a pardon
- Railway jobs have a zero tolerance policy towards the use of alcohol and drugs. Applicants should be prepared to submit to a mandatory drug and alcohol test upon employment, and to expect post-accident alcohol and drug use tests. BCIT will enforce the same zero-tolerance policy during training
- Some jobs include strict medical rules and requirements (i.e. Conductors, Rail Traffic Controllers). Unfit candidates (i.e. colour blindness and certain prescription medications), will be excluded from employment. As an employment condition, you will have to pass a mandatory railway medical exam. Please consult the [Railway Association of Canada](#) and the [Medical Rules Handbook](#) for specific details
- High school graduation or GED are usually required
- Periodic re-certifications and technical training are required throughout employment
- You need to be flexible: able to go where the jobs are, with the understanding that jobs may not be in the Lower Mainland and that there may be layoffs in the first years of this career

**Industrial Railways** generally may have fewer requirements. These requirements will vary from one employer to another

## **Will this training work for me?**

- There is a variety of railway courses, ranging from several days to several weeks. [Course outlines](#) are available on line
- Some courses have final exams and certifications that will be beneficial in obtaining employment
- The most popular courses resulting in certifications for successful graduates are:

[RAIL 1001 – Railway and Rail Yard Employment Skills](#) [5 weeks, 4 days / week]

Designed for those with no railway experience, aiming to work for Industrial Railways, or in some Class 1 or Shortline Railways jobs: e.g. Rail Car Mechanic and Heavy Duty Mechanic

[Rail 1010 – Canadian Rail Operating Rules Certification](#) [3 weeks, 5 days / week]

Designed for those with minimum of three years railway experience, or graduates of RAIL 1001, aiming to work in Class 1 or Shortline Railways: e.g. Conductors

- To comply with railway industry protocols and for your safety, cell phones or electronic devices will not be used in the classroom or in the railway yard
- You will be required to supply your own Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

Work gloves with high-visibility stripes, Clear protective glasses, High-visibility waterproof clothing with no hoods, Steel-toed, leather lace-up boots: Canadian Standards Association (CSA) approved 6" high, with ankle support, and a minimum 3/8" heel height at right angle from the sole;

**Register for an upcoming railway information session; [bcit.ca/infosessions](http://bcit.ca/infosessions)**

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