

Systems Operator

Other Titles: Load Dispatcher

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), systems operators, also referred to as load dispatchers, are employed by utility companies and other companies that access the power grid. The job of a systems operator is to control the flow of electricity through transmission lines to industrial plants.

Duties

- Duties of a systems operator include controlling the stream of electricity, monitoring voltage transformers, operating circuit breakers, recording readings from the map board, communicating with power plant operators and energy traders, and foreseeing the need for power changes for certain weather conditions. According to the BLS, a systems operator may also operate machinery that increases and decreases voltage.

Education

- A systems operator will need to have a mixture of education, experience and on-the-job training, according to the BLS. A high school diploma is the minimum requirement for a job in this field. However, according to the BLS, workers with college degrees have a much better chance of landing a job. Prospective systems operators with mechanical, technical and computer skills are usually preferred over candidates who lack these skills.
- Education programs currently available: [Degrees & Certificates](#)
- Certification: North American Electrical Reliability Corporation (NERC). Training available at Centralia College through the Energy Technology/Power Operations program.

Environment

- For those considering a career as a systems operator, keep in mind that the job may require sitting or standing in a control room. According to the BLS, the work is not physically demanding, but it does require continuous attention. For systems operators who perform most of their work outside of the control room, some dangers may include falling, electricity shocks or burns.

Salary

- According to the BLS, the average annual earnings for systems operators was \$65,890 as of May 2008. The top 10 percent of workers earned about \$88,500 yearly, while the lowest-paid systems operators earned less than \$45,000.