

Can Women be CNC* Operators?



YES!

"The CNC machines are very fast, very efficient, very accurate. But they are useless without skilled numerical control machine operators...Because CNC machines improve productivity, more and more companies are using them." —www.acinet.org

*Computer Numerical Control

Job Outlook

Companies are switching to computer-controlled machines because they improve quality and lower costs. Growth in this occupation will be limited because machine operators can be more productive. More growth will occur in plastics than in metalworking. This is because plastic products increasingly are being substituted for metal ones. Employment levels of machine operators are influenced by economic cycles.

Idaho Wages
Hourly wage \$9.12 to \$20.62
Median wage \$12.77
(Idaho Occupation & Wage Report, 2006)

To be a CNC Operator one must:

- have a high school diploma or GED; and
- complete on-the-job training, an apprenticeship, or a training program.
- CNC Operators can learn their skills by attending formal training programs.
- College of Southern Idaho offers course in Manufacturing Technology that trains CNC Operators. **Technical and Associate of Applied Science degrees are offered at the College of Southern Idaho.**

Idaho Employment

242 jobs— small occupation
26% —annual growth
10 jobs—low annual openings
Nationally, women make up 8.7% of the labor force.
Source: US Dept of Labor Women's Bureau (2007)

Computer Numerical Control machine operators run computer-controlled machines. These machines cut, shape, drill, or otherwise modify metal or plastic parts. The computer program tells the machine which tools to use and how to use them. Operators mainly set up, tend, and maintain the machines. Operators begin by setting up the machine. They load the machine controller (computer) with instructions or programs. These programs usually are written for operators, but operators occasionally do their own programming. They determine the speed and feed ratios as well as the size and position of cuts. Once the programs are entered, operators select, measure, install, and secure the tools and attachments the machines will use.

Regardless of Gender CNC Operators Must:

- Monitor machines and control panel displays to ensure machines are operating correctly.
- Determine how to set up machines. Use blueprints, instructions, and work experience.
- Load machine controllers (computers) with instructions or programs.
- Select, measure, install, and secure tools on machine. Use hand tools and precision instruments.
- Calculate machine speeds and feed ratios. Determine the size and position of cuts.
- Enter commands or adjust machine controls to correct errors.
- Stop machines to remove finished products or to change tools or setup.
- Measure finished products to ensure they meet requirements.
- Maintain machines and replace machine tools when they become worn or broken.
- Confer with supervisors or programmers if problems occur.
- Remove and replace dull cutting tools.

College of Southern Idaho
Center for New Directions
Non Traditional Occupations Program
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Manufacturing Technology Program
Call McKay Womack—732-6375