

CHAPTER 9 PHYSICS CAREERS

HVAC Technician

According to Doug Garner, HVAC technicians do more than merely keep buildings at a comfortable temperature. They also help clients such as the food service industry by keeping food refrigerated and bacteria in check. "Heat and temperature affect us more than you might think at first," says Garner.

Although someone interested in becoming an HVAC technician can begin to train while still in high school, Garner stresses that a traditional education is still important. "Our technicians must be able to communicate well and have a good mechanical aptitude." According to Garner, such background won't be wasted; the HVAC business has a place for just about any skill that a student brings to the field. "Our industry needs good, qualified people, and there are a lot of companies looking for them."

PHYSICS CAREERS

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HVAC stands for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. An HVAC technician knows what it takes to keep buildings warm in winter and cool in summer. To learn more about working with HVAC as a career, read the interview with contractor and business owner Doug Garner.

What does an HVAC technician do?

Basically, we sell, replace, and repair air conditioning and heating equipment. We replace obsolete A/C and heating units in older homes and buildings, we install new units in new homes and buildings, and we repair units when they break down.

How did you become an HVAC technician?

There are numerous ways to get into the business. When I was about 17 years old, I was given an opportunity to work for a man with whom I went to church. I worked as an apprentice for three years after high school, and I learned from him and a couple of very good technicians. I also took some business courses at a local community college to help with the business end.

What about HVAC made it more interesting than other fields?

There were other things that I was interested in doing, but realistically HVAC was more practical. In other words, that's where the money and opportunities were for me.

What is the nature of your work?

I have a company with two service technicians and an apprentice. Most of my duties involve getting jobs secured, bidding on and designing the different systems to suit the needs of the



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customer. I have to have a basic understanding of advertising, marketing, and sales as well as of the technical areas as they apply to this field. Our technicians must be able to communicate well and have a good mechanical aptitude.

What do you like most about your job?

You get to work in a lot of different places and situations. It is never boring, and you meet a lot of people. You can make as much money as you are willing to work for.

What advice would you give to students who are interested in your field?

Take a course in HVAC at a technical institute or trade school, and then work as an apprentice for a few years.

Mechanical engineering, sales, communication, and people skills are all important in this field; the more education you have, the more attractive you can be to a company.

