

HEALTH CARE JOBS TOP HIGHEST-PAID OCCUPATIONS, BLS REPORTS

Thirteen of the 15 highest-paid occupations in 2007 were health care practitioners, led by anesthesiologists and surgeons, according to figures released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in its annual report on occupational employment and wages. Anesthesiologists had the highest average hourly pay for all occupations at \$92.68, with surgeons ranking second at \$92.03, and orthodontists third at \$89.11. Those wages translate into average annual salaries of \$192,780 for anesthesiologists, \$191,410 for surgeons, and \$185,340 for orthodontists.

At the bottom of the wage scale were food preparation and serving workers, who earned an average of \$8.03 per hour or \$16,700 per year. Next to last were fast food cooks, at \$8.11 per hour or \$16,860 per year. Four of the five lowest-paying occupations were related to food preparation and service with the exception being shampooers, in the personal care and service category, who earned \$8.41 per hour or \$17,490 per year. Other jobs at the low end of the wage scale included dishwashers (\$8.20 per hour) and dining room and cafeteria attendants and bartender helpers (\$8.36 per hour).

The two occupations among the top 15 highest-paid that were not health-care related were chief executives, who averaged \$151,370 per year or \$72.77 per hour; and airline pilots, co-pilots, and flight engineers, whose yearly salaries averaged \$148,810 but whose hourly pay data was not available. Podiatrists were 16th on the list, with hourly pay of \$57.59 or \$119,790 per year, followed by lawyers, who earned an average of \$56.87 per hour or \$118,280 per year.

Among broad occupational categories, food preparation and serving had the lowest average hourly wage (\$9.35), followed by farming, fishing, and forestry (\$10.89); building and grounds cleaning and maintenance (\$11.33); and personal care and service (\$11.53). Meanwhile, the highest paying occupational group was management (\$46.22), followed by legal occupations (\$42.53) and computer and mathematical jobs (\$34.71).

In the health care industry, the data show that pay for the broad category of health care support workers was much lower than that of the more skilled group of technical workers and health care practitioners, who have been among the highest-compensated workers for the past several years. The average hourly wage for doctors, other health care practitioners, and technical workers was \$31.26, while health care support workers earned an average of \$12.31 per hour.

Retail salesperson was the largest occupation, with about 4.4 million workers. The next largest occupations were cashiers (3.5 million) and general office clerks (3.0 million). Other occupations with more than 2 million workers included combined food preparation and serving workers (2.6 million); registered nurses (2.5 million); waiters and waitresses (2.4 million); hand laborers and freight, stock, and material movers (2.4 million); customer service representatives (2.2 million); and janitors and cleaners, excluding maids (2.1 million).

The report, *Occupational Employment and Wages, 2007*, is available at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ocwage.pdf>.

(Source: BNA, *Daily Labor Report*, No. 91, May 12, 2008, pp. D7-D25.)