

# Career Pathways in Lane County



# Wood Products Sector Profile



## Inside:

- Types of jobs in the wood products industry
- Skills you need to get hired
- Training and post-secondary education options after high school graduation
- Information about wood products companies and job prospects in Lane County
- What you can do to get started now on a career in the wood products industry

# Wood Products Sector Jobs

The majority of wood products companies in Lane County are sawmills. Regardless of the mill type (laminated, stud, lumber, etc.), many of the same job titles exist.

With the modernization of sawmill processes and machinery, few jobs within the mill are as physically demanding as they used to be. General laborers like the **clean-up crew** work outside and move about the mill. **Pulling green chain** is also a common entry-level job, where product is collected and moved down the line to be graded and sorted.

Entry-level positions are just the start. Wood products companies **look to hire from within** before posting job openings externally. Motivated workers can climb the ranks quickly by showing interest in moving up. Promotions can include **forklift driving, machine operating, grading wood quality**, or eventually going back to school to become **certified in a trade**.

Within a sawmill you'll encounter many **trade-certified** employees. Mills employ **electricians, saw filers, welders, fabricators, and millwrights**, all with one common goal: to keep the plant running. Machinery of this scale requires constant maintenance, and every trade listed above works to keep them operating at maximum efficiency.



Within companies in the wood products sector there are departments that are common to many industries. Large companies have **human resources** staff who handle hiring, employee relations, payroll, benefits, and training.

Employee safety is a major focus in sawmills and companies employ **quality control** teams to study and adjust work processes to make them as safe as possible. Quality control teams train employees on a monthly basis.

Large businesses generally have **accounts payable** and **accounts receivable** teams to handle the payment cycle for materials and products.

Finally, companies within the wood products sector also employ an **IT team** to monitor and protect their information technology systems.

Forestry is a career path dedicated planting, conserving, repairing, and caring for our forests and the natural resources within them.

The College of Forestry at OSU has programs in forestry, forest engineering, natural resources, and renewable materials. A degree in any of these programs qualifies you for a multitude of jobs in forestry, including positions as a **Forester, Forest Technician, Field Researcher, Land Use Planner, Environmental Engineer, and Conservation and Resource Forester**.

“Over the next 10 years, the Oregon Employment Department estimates that there will be more openings to fill in wood products manufacturing than there are people currently working in the industry.”  
– Lane Workforce Partnership

The Oregon Employment Department estimates there will be roughly **4,100 job openings** in the wood products sector between 2017-2027 in Lane County and 95% of them will be due to replacement.

# Employable Skills

The ability to **communicate** is a critical skill in the wood products sector, just as it is in many industries. Communication is essential to explain complex mechanical issues, it's used to relay information to the person down the line from you, and it's key to keeping the work environment safe. In tandem with **common sense** and **attention to detail**, communication is a skill that is vital to ensuring worker safety.

Basic **math** and **computer science** skills are used in every career in this industry. In modern sawmills the machinery is controlled by a computer, so workers must be comfortable with basic computer science.

**Punctuality** is a quality that transcends the wood products industry. Sawmill managers stress the importance of being on time to work because it's an indicator of maturity, time management, and respect for your employer.

Finally, developing an understanding of **basic machinery** is a skill that can set you apart as an applicant. Students are encouraged to take **any technical classes** available to them while still in high school. If you enjoy working with your hands, you'll likely enjoy a job in this industry.



## Tips for Building a Strong Work Ethic

In conversations with local sawmill managers, it becomes clear that one of the most important skills employers look for is a **strong work ethic**. But how does one demonstrate work ethic on a resume or in an interview? Here's what employers had to say...

**"Show up, work hard, and you will move up."**

- Matt Meyers, Weyerhaeuser

**7 ways** to build and demonstrate a strong **work ethic** while still in school:

- Find **part-time work** at a local gas station, restaurant, auto shop...anywhere!
- Consider **wildland firefighting** over summer break
- If you're a minor, secure work by mowing lawns in your neighborhood, or offering childcare.
- Demonstrate your **school involvement** by joining a club, participating in sports, or volunteering.
- Form **respectful relationships** with teachers and coaches.
- Find a **mentor** (teacher, coach, parent, friend's parent, etc.).
- Begin **working with your hands** to better understand basic machinery. Work on an old appliance or a car, or build something with scrap materials.





# “How can I get a job in the Wood Products Industry?”

## High School Diploma / GED

- Start at a mill in an entry-level position. Local sawmills will hire high school graduates with little to no work experience. Companies might also send motivated employees back to school to complete apprenticeship programs.
- Average starting wage is \$18/hr.

## Associate's Degree

- Complete an electrical apprenticeship program at LCC, LBCC, or UCC.
- Study industrial mechanics and maintenance technology at LCC.
- Earn a fabrication or welding certification at LCC.
- Earn a manufacturing technology certification at LCC.

## Bachelor's Degree

- Get a bachelor's degree from OSU's College of Forestry.
- Earn a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from OSU, UP, PSU, or OIT.
- Complete an apprenticeship to become a millwright or a manufacturing plant electrician at LCC.
- Complete an apprenticeship in saw filing at UCC.

“Lane County is home to over 60 wood products manufacturing companies, **employing over 8,000 people** and bringing nearly \$400 million in wages to the area. The industry’s **average wage of \$21.36 an hour** is slightly higher than the average Lane County wage of \$20.51 an hour.”

- Lane Workforce Partnership

### Check out OFRI and all its resources:

The Oregon Forest Resources Institute is dedicated to advancing public understanding of forests, forest management and forest products, and encouraging sound forestry through landowner education.

The primary goal of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI) is to educate the public about forestry and responsible forest management. OFRI actively communicates with the public, educators and forest landowners to help them better understand the topics and information relevant to each group. Using this information, OFRI produces numerous publications, online resources and videos, and also organizes and co-sponsors tours, events and conferences covering a broad range of forestry-related topics. [[www.OregonForests.org](http://www.OregonForests.org)]

**Local Industry:** [www.laneworkforce.org](http://www.laneworkforce.org)

**Tours:** Call a local sawmill and ask for a tour - they're eager to show you around!

**Job shadows & internships:** [elevationlanecounty.org](http://elevationlanecounty.org)

Check with your high school counselor for the date of the next **Experience Oregon Manufacturing!**

## Get Started!

