

Superintendent

There are many types of construction superintendents and their job titles, job descriptions, and responsibilities vary a great deal from one company to another. This can be confusing, and there are no hard and fast rules or definitions which apply to all construction firms, all construction projects, or all supervisory positions. A general sequence of titles is indicated below, but it must be noted that many are used interchangeably, and duties will vary by firm and project(s) size. The thing to remember, therefore, is that the position of "Superintendent" involves increasing degrees of responsibility and authority - regardless of the title.

Nature of Work

Generally speaking, a job superintendent or project superintendent is the contractor's representative at a construction site. The superintendent directs and coordinates the activities of the various trade groups such as Carpenters, Equipment Operators, Iron Workers, etc. - on site. Responsibilities include making sure that the work progresses according to schedule, that material and equipment are delivered to the site on time, and that the activities of the various workers do not interfere with one another. The superintendent supervises all these activities by talking with and directing the foremen for the different trades or craft workers. Some of these foremen and their workers may be employed by the superintendent's own construction company, while others may be employed by other companies working on the job.

As stated, the responsibilities of a job and/or project superintendent are often the same. Yet, in some instances either one (especially the project superintendent) may be over the superintendent(s) in charge of a specific jobsite's activities, e.g. grading. In the same sense, a general superintendent (often found on larger jobs and/or with large firms) may have duties similar to the project superintendent mentioned above, but with an even broader range of responsibilities. A general superintendent might direct the work on a number of construction sites with those superintendents reporting to him. A "Project Manager" is another construction occupation title for a position which again may overlap and, on occasion, be used interchangeably with general, project, or job superintendent. A review of the definition for Project Manager might be helpful.

Education and Training

Most superintendents have many years of experience in one or more of the construction trades. Generally, contractors have selected their superintendents from among the foremen who demonstrate leadership and a working knowledge of their craft. While a college education is not necessarily required, it is helpful. A superintendent must have a good understanding of construction methods, scheduling, and blueprint reading, as well as a basic knowledge of communication skills. Demonstrated leadership ability is essential.

Advancement Potential

Depending upon the size of the firm (and the job titles used by that firm), job or project superintendents may become general superintendents. Superintendents often become principal officers of their construction firm, and on occasion start their own company.