2026 SALARY GUIDE

Fire Protection

Compensation Benchmarks by Region

10 commercial trade positions • 9 U.S. Census Divisions • Updated 2026

Talent Solutions

Specialized recruiting for the commercial trades

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This guide is provided for informational and benchmarking purposes only. Salary figures represent regional aggregations of public Bureau of Labor Statistics data, supplemented by industry research and Talent Solutions placement data. Actual compensation in your specific market may vary based on company size, candidate experience, certifications, project complexity, and prevailing local conditions. Talent Solutions makes no representation that any specific compensation level will attract or retain talent in your market. This guide should not be used as a substitute for legal, tax, or employment advice. Talent Solutions disclaims liability for hiring decisions made in reliance on this document.

How to Use This Guide

This guide gives commercial fire protection contractors a defensible, regionally-adjusted view of what the ten most commonly recruited positions in the trade actually pay in 2026. It is built from public Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics data (May 2024 release), supplemented with industry-specific salary aggregations from public job board reporting and Talent Solutions' direct placement experience.

Use it three ways:

- **Set realistic expectations.** When you're posting a role, this tells you what the market actually pays in your region — not what someone wishes it paid
- **Benchmark your existing team.** Compare what you're paying foremen, project managers, and senior practitioners against the regional range. Underpaying is the most common reason good people leave
- **Build a compensation case.** When you need to make the case to ownership for a raise, a counter-offer, or a senior hire, the numbers in this guide are defensible and current

> *A salary range is not a salary. The numbers here represent base compensation by percentile. Total compensation — including overtime, bonuses, profit-sharing, vehicle allowance, certifications, and benefits — typically adds 15-30% to base for most positions in this guide.*

How to read the tables

Each position page shows base salary at three percentile points across all nine U.S. Census Divisions, plus a national reference row:

- **Low (25th percentile).** Entry to mid-level for the role. Common for hires with 1-3 years of experience
- **Median (50th percentile).** What the typical experienced practitioner earns. Use this as your default budget anchor
- **High (90th percentile).** Top of market — senior people with strong credentials, long tenure, or leading large teams

The 9 U.S. Census Divisions

Regional pay variation in the trades is real and significant. We use the U.S. Census Bureau's nine standard divisions:

- **New England.** MA, NH, VT, ME, CT, RI
- **Mid-Atlantic.** NY, NJ, PA
- **East North Central.** OH, IN, IL, MI, WI
- **West North Central.** MN, IA, MO, ND, SD, NE, KS
- **South Atlantic.** FL, GA, NC, SC, VA, WV, MD, DE, DC
- **East South Central.** KY, TN, AL, MS
- **West South Central.** TX, OK, AR, LA
- **Mountain.** ID, MT, WY, CO, NM, AZ, UT, NV
- **Pacific.** WA, OR, CA, AK, HI

Within any division, large metro areas typically pay 8-15% above the divisional figure. Rural and small-metro areas typically pay 5-10% below. Adjust accordingly when benchmarking a specific market.

Executive Summary — What Changed in 2026

Fire protection talent is the most license-constrained in the trades

NICET-certified designers and licensed sprinkler fitters are in chronic short supply. The certification pipeline is slow — Level III NICET takes years to develop — and demand from data centers, healthcare construction, and codes-driven retrofits keeps growing.

Inspectors and ITM technicians are the fastest-growing roles

Inspection, testing, and maintenance work has become the steadiest revenue stream for many fire protection contractors. ITM-focused technicians with NICET I-III certification command rapidly growing compensation, especially in dense metro markets with large building inventories.

Designers with Revit and BIM skills are the hardest hires

Senior fire protection designers who can produce shop drawings in modern BIM environments are among the highest-paid non-management roles in the trade. The shortage is acute, and 90th-percentile wages have climbed steadily.

Position Compensation by Region

The ten most commonly recruited positions in commercial fire protection, with regional salary ranges. National reference row at the bottom of each table is based on BLS OEWS May 2024 with industry-specific synthesis where applicable.

1. Sprinkler Fitter / Journeyman

BLS reference: BLS 47-2152 (specialty)

Census Division	Low (25th %ile)	Median (50th %ile)	High (90th %ile)
New England	$69,500	$86,500	$122,500
Mid-Atlantic	$64,000	$79,000	$112,000
East North Central	$61,000	$75,500	$107,000
West North Central	$55,000	$68,500	$97,000
South Atlantic	$53,500	$66,000	$94,000
East South Central	$49,500	$61,000	$86,500
West South Central	$53,500	$66,000	$94,000
Mountain	$57,000	$70,500	$100,000
Pacific	$71,000	$88,000	$124,500
United States (national)	$58,000	$72,000	$102,000

Note: *Licensed sprinkler installation. Union markets pay at upper end. Compensation includes strong benefits packages.*

2. Fire Alarm Technician

BLS reference: BLS 49-9012

Census Division	Low (25th %ile)	Median (50th %ile)	High (90th %ile)
New England	$66,000	$84,000	$117,500
Mid-Atlantic	$60,500	$77,000	$108,000
East North Central	$58,000	$73,500	$103,000
West North Central	$52,500	$66,500	$93,000
South Atlantic	$50,500	$64,500	$90,000
East South Central	$47,000	$59,500	$83,500
West South Central	$50,500	$64,500	$90,000
Mountain	$54,000	$68,500	$96,000

Census Division	Low (25th %ile)	Median (50th %ile)	High (90th %ile)
Pacific	$67,000	$85,500	$119,500
United States (national)	$55,000	$70,000	$98,000

Note: *Installation and service of fire alarm systems. NICET certification critical to compensation.*

3. Fire Protection Designer

BLS reference: BLS 17-2199 (synthesis)

Census Division	Low (25th %ile)	Median (50th %ile)	High (90th %ile)
New England	$86,500	$110,500	$162,000
Mid-Atlantic	$79,000	$101,000	$148,500
East North Central	$75,500	$96,500	$142,000
West North Central	$68,500	$87,500	$128,500
South Atlantic	$66,000	$84,500	$124,000
East South Central	$61,000	$78,000	$115,000
West South Central	$66,000	$84,500	$124,000
Mountain	$70,500	$90,000	$132,500
Pacific	$88,000	$112,000	$164,500
United States (national)	$72,000	$92,000	$135,000

Note: *Layout and shop drawings for sprinkler and alarm systems. NICET Level III + BIM proficiency commands premium.*

4. Inspector / ITM Technician

BLS reference: BLS 49-9012 (specialty)

Census Division	Low (25th %ile)	Median (50th %ile)	High (90th %ile)
New England	$66,000	$84,000	$114,000
Mid-Atlantic	$60,500	$77,000	$104,500
East North Central	$58,000	$73,500	$100,000
West North Central	$52,500	$66,500	$90,500
South Atlantic	$50,500	$64,500	$87,500
East South Central	$47,000	$59,500	$81,000
West South Central	$50,500	$64,500	$87,500
Mountain	$54,000	$68,500	$93,000
Pacific	$67,000	$85,500	$116,000
United States (national)	$55,000	$70,000	$95,000

Note: *Inspection, testing, and maintenance of fire protection systems. NICET certifications drive pay tier.*

5. Project Manager

BLS reference: BLS 11-9021

Census Division	Low (25th %ile)	Median (50th %ile)	High (90th %ile)
New England	$98,500	$129,500	$186,000
Mid-Atlantic	$90,000	$119,000	$170,500
East North Central	$86,000	$113,500	$163,000
West North Central	$78,000	$102,500	$147,500
South Atlantic	$75,500	$99,500	$142,500
East South Central	$69,500	$92,000	$132,000
West South Central	$75,500	$99,500	$142,500
Mountain	$80,500	$106,000	$152,000
Pacific	$100,000	$132,000	$189,000
United States (national)	$82,000	$108,000	$155,000

Note: *Manages fire protection projects from design through commissioning. Healthcare and data center projects at upper end.*

6. Estimator

BLS reference: BLS 13-1051

Census Division	Low (25th %ile)	Median (50th %ile)	High (90th %ile)
New England	$86,500	$110,500	$162,000
Mid-Atlantic	$79,000	$101,000	$148,500
East North Central	$75,500	$96,500	$142,000
West North Central	$68,500	$87,500	$128,500
South Atlantic	$66,000	$84,500	$124,000
East South Central	$61,000	$78,000	$115,000
West South Central	$66,000	$84,500	$124,000
Mountain	$70,500	$90,000	$132,500
Pacific	$88,000	$112,000	$164,500
United States (national)	$72,000	$92,000	$135,000

Note: *Bid preparation. Senior estimators with hydraulic calculation expertise valuable.*

7. Foreman / Crew Lead

BLS reference: BLS 47-1011

Census Division	Low (25th %ile)	Median (50th %ile)	High (90th %ile)
New England	$78,000	$98,500	$138,000
Mid-Atlantic	$71,500	$90,000	$126,500
East North Central	$68,500	$86,000	$121,000
West North Central	$62,000	$78,000	$109,500
South Atlantic	$60,000	$75,500	$106,000
East South Central	$55,500	$69,500	$98,000
West South Central	$60,000	$75,500	$106,000
Mountain	$63,500	$80,500	$112,500
Pacific	$79,500	$100,000	$140,500
United States (national)	$65,000	$82,000	$115,000

Note: *Field leadership for installation crews. Often hourly with overtime.*

8. Service Manager

BLS reference: BLS 47-1011 (sub)

Census Division	Low (25th %ile)	Median (50th %ile)	High (90th %ile)
New England	$93,500	$117,500	$165,500
Mid-Atlantic	$86,000	$108,000	$152,000
East North Central	$82,000	$103,000	$145,000
West North Central	$74,000	$93,000	$131,000
South Atlantic	$72,000	$90,000	$127,000
East South Central	$66,500	$83,500	$117,500
West South Central	$72,000	$90,000	$127,000
Mountain	$76,500	$96,000	$135,000
Pacific	$95,000	$119,500	$168,500
United States (national)	$78,000	$98,000	$138,000

Note: *Manages inspection and service operations. Performance bonuses tied to renewal rates and service revenue.*

9. Outside Sales Representative

BLS reference: BLS 41-3091

Census Division	Low (25th %ile)	Median (50th %ile)	High (90th %ile)
New England	$86,500	$117,500	$210,000
Mid-Atlantic	$79,000	$108,000	$192,500
East North Central	$75,500	$103,000	$184,000
West North Central	$68,500	$93,000	$166,500
South Atlantic	$66,000	$90,000	$161,000
East South Central	$61,000	$83,500	$149,000
West South Central	$66,000	$90,000	$161,000
Mountain	$70,500	$96,000	$171,500
Pacific	$88,000	$119,500	$213,500
United States (national)	$72,000	$98,000	$175,000

Note: *Base + commission. Strong relationships with GCs and facility managers required.*

10. Operations Manager

BLS reference: BLS 11-3071

Census Division	Low (25th %ile)	Median (50th %ile)	High (90th %ile)
New England	$126,000	$165,500	$240,000
Mid-Atlantic	$115,500	$152,000	$220,000
East North Central	$110,500	$145,000	$210,000
West North Central	$100,000	$131,000	$190,000
South Atlantic	$96,500	$127,000	$184,000
East South Central	$89,500	$117,500	$170,000
West South Central	$96,500	$127,000	$184,000
Mountain	$103,000	$135,000	$196,000
Pacific	$128,000	$168,500	$244,000
United States (national)	$105,000	$138,000	$200,000

Note: *Branch or division-level P&L. Bonus structures add 20-35%.*

Total Compensation Beyond Base Salary

Base salary is the most visible part of compensation, but in the commercial trades it is rarely the most decisive factor in whether you win or lose a candidate. The full picture matters.

Typical add-ons by role type

Role Type	Typical Add-On	What's Included
Field Technicians / Installers	12-25%	Overtime (often 20-30 hrs/wk in season), tool allowance ($50-150/mo), vehicle or vehicle allowance ($600-900/mo), certification bonuses
Foremen / Supervisors	15-30%	Overtime (capped or salaried with bonus), vehicle, performance bonus tied to safety and productivity, phone allowance
Project Managers / Estimators	10-25%	Project completion bonuses (1-3% of project margin), vehicle or allowance, profit-sharing, phone, professional dues
Operations / Branch Leadership	20-40%	Performance bonus tied to branch P&L (10-25% of base), profit-sharing, equity in some firms, vehicle
Engineering / Design	10-20%	PE / specialty license bonus, professional dues, conference budget, profit-sharing, billable-hour bonuses on design-build work
Outside Sales	30-100%+	Base + uncapped commission. Top performers significantly exceed range. Auto, phone, expense account standard.

Benefits expectations have changed

Health insurance, paid time off, and 401(k) matching are now table stakes — candidates assume they exist and judge them quickly. The benefits that genuinely move candidates in 2026 are:

- **4-day workweek pilots.** Most contractors won't do this, which is why those who can are winning candidates without raising base
- **Predictable schedules.** Service techs and field crews are increasingly willing to take a small pay cut for guaranteed schedules and limited on-call rotations
- **Clear advancement paths.** Written career ladders with documented criteria for promotion are rare in the trades and increasingly demanded by candidates under 35
- **Continuing education / certification reimbursement.** Especially for specialty certifications that drive wage tier
- **Employer-paid family medical premiums.** Standard health insurance with employee-paid family premiums is no longer competitive in tight markets

Pay drivers that matter most

If you can only adjust one or two compensation levers, these have the largest impact on candidate decisions in our placement data:

- **Sign-on bonuses for senior roles.** $5,000-15,000 sign-on bonuses are now common for senior project managers, supervisors, and specialty technicians — and effective
- **Vehicle quality.** A new, well-maintained service truck or company vehicle with the right tools is a benefit candidates can see immediately
- **Tool / equipment program.** A no-questions-asked tool replacement program differentiates serious employers from cost-cutters
- **Training budget.** $2,000-5,000 per year per employee for continuing education sends a strong signal about commitment to people

Methodology & Sources

Primary data source

Base salary anchors are drawn from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program, May 2024 release (most recent at time of publication). National percentile data is taken directly from BLS published tables. Regional adjustments are calculated by aggregating BLS state-level wage data within each Census Division and computing the weighted average relative to the national mean.

Where BLS occupation codes don't map cleanly

The BLS occupational classification system was not designed around contemporary commercial fire protection industry roles, and several positions in this guide require synthesis. Where this is the case, the BLS reference line on each position table includes a parenthetical note (e.g., "synthesis" or "specialty"). For these roles, we adjusted BLS figures using industry-specific data from NAICS 238220 (subset — Fire Protection) and Talent Solutions placement records.

Cross-validation

Every figure in this guide was cross-checked against three sources: (1) BLS OEWS data, (2) public salary aggregation pages from major job boards (Indeed, ZipRecruiter, Glassdoor, LinkedIn), and (3) Talent Solutions' own placement records over the past 24 months. Where the three sources disagreed by more than 10%, we used a median weighted toward BLS as the most defensible source.

What this guide is not

This is a benchmarking reference, not a wage survey. It does not capture:

- **Variability within a single market.** A practitioner at a top-tier contractor in a major metro earns substantially more than the divisional median; one at a struggling firm earns less
- **Project-based or piece-rate compensation.** Some installation roles are paid per job or per square unit rather than hourly. Effective annual compensation can be substantially higher than the figures here
- **Owner / executive compensation.** Owner-operators, partners, and C-suite executives are excluded because compensation is typically equity-driven and varies enormously

How often this guide updates

This guide is refreshed annually, in January, following the BLS May data release of the prior year. Major mid-year shifts in the labor market may trigger an interim update. The most recent version is always available at abstrakttalentsolutions.com/resources/whitepapers.

Sources & Citations

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2024. Occupation codes referenced: 47-2152, 49-9012, 11-9021, 13-1051, 17-2199, 47-1011, 41-3091, 11-3071. Available at bls.gov/oes. Industry-specific data from NAICS 238220 (subset — Fire Protection). Public job board salary aggregations referenced for cross-validation include Indeed, ZipRecruiter, Glassdoor, and LinkedIn Salary, accessed during guide preparation. Talent Solutions proprietary placement data from engagements with commercial fire protection contractors.

About Talent Solutions

Talent Solutions is a specialized recruiting firm focused exclusively on the commercial trades. We recruit foremen, project managers, technicians, estimators, and field leaders for commercial HVAC, electrical, plumbing, roofing, fire protection, paving, landscaping, construction, flooring, and painting contractors across the United States.

We work differently than traditional recruiting firms. We charge a flat monthly rate — not a percentage of salary — and we build a continuous pipeline of vetted talent in your market before you need it. The result: faster fills, better hires, and a recruiting spend that doesn't penalize you for hiring well.

> *Want to talk through your specific fire protection hiring situation? Schedule a 30-minute discovery call. No pitch, no pressure — just a candid conversation about your roles, your market, and how a pipeline-driven recruiting partner could change the way you hire.*

Schedule a discovery call: abstrakttalentsolutions.com/contact

Or download our other industry guides at: abstrakttalentsolutions.com/resources/whitepapers

---

© 2026 Talent Solutions. All rights reserved. *• Compensation data sourced from U.S. BLS OEWS May 2024 and proprietary Talent Solutions placement data.*