

Imagine being a construction worker, walking on the steel framework of a tall building. Even if you conduct yourself in the safest manner possible, your safety can often depend on how others conduct themselves. Construction Safety Officers (CSOs) implement safety programs to ensure that all workers on the site work safely.

As a CSO, you might implement such safety programs, do site inspections, advise management of any deficiencies and generally maintain a safe worksite. You may also implement procedures and inspect for compliance to ensure the safety of non-construction people outside of the site to make sure they are not put at risk by construction activities.

You will work for the general contractor or the company contracted to be responsible for safety of construction activities. You will normally do two site inspections per shift, as well as any necessary follow-up.

You will also act as a liaison with the subcontractors and Trades Safety Coordinators (TSCs). The rest of the time you will be assigned to any task within your capabilities, as long as it does not interfere with your ability to respond to safety issues if and when they arise.

Where Will You Work?

You will likely be employed with a company working in the city on a complex building as defined in the city bylaws.

You might also find work outside the city, with progressive construction companies who understand that CSOs are effective at reducing the number of safety incidents that give rise to claims.

Working conditions are usually a little cleaner than other construction work, almost always more complex, occasionally frustrating and very often quite rewarding in a personal sense.

The hours are similar to those of other construction workers. Physical requirements include a medical report that certifies that you are capable of getting around a construction site to do the required inspections.

How Much Will You Earn?

Salaries vary, as some CSOs are employed within a bargaining unit. That means they are members of a union and would be paid at a specific union rate. Others have pre-set salaries. Some CSOs may have additional training, such as first aid or supervision, which may add to their value.

How Does the Future Look?

The Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) regulations have put increased emphasis on qualified CSOs, so the market for people with this skill will continue to expand.

How Can You Get Started?

To prepare for this career you should get as much experience as possible in the construction field. Take as many jobs as possible in the construction trade, even if they are small.

In high school be sure to take courses in communications, business, report writing, etc.

What Will You Need?

In order to enter this field you require at least one year of experience in the construction field plus 80 hours of training, assignments and completion of a final exam. Upon successfully completing these requirements, you will apply for certification.

Post Secondary Possibilities

City of Vancouver Engineering Department. Training programs are available through the BC Safety Council, BC Construction Industry Health and Safety Council, and BC Institute of Technology.

- Check with your career facilitator or counsellor for other sources of information applicable to education options for this technology.
- The TechWORKS! web site is an important online resource and provides links to career information that will be of interest to students pursuing a career in technology.

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