Driller

Drillers are crew members on offshore oil or gas rigs. They set up, operate and maintain the equipment for drilling wells in the search for oil and gas. They supervise the other members of the drilling team: roustabouts, roughnecks and the derrickhand.

The Work

You could be:

- controlling operations on the drill floor and supervising other staff involved in the drilling operations
- assembling drilling tools and connecting sections of the drill pipe
- operating the machinery that raises and lowers the drill string and bit
- maintaining the speed of rotation of the drill string, the weight on the bit and the mud (lubricant used for the drill bit) circulation rate
- operating the valves that control the flow of oil, gas or water
- pressure testing well control equipment during stages of drilling
- keeping records of the drilling conditions and measurements and progress made
- making sure production targets are met
- observing health and safety rules.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual salaries vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

The salary for experienced drillers can be around £60,000 a year. (In addition, employers provide accommodation and food, as well as warm and waterproof clothing).

Conditions

- You would work on an oil or gas rig outdoors. Conditions can be very cold, wet, windy, noisy and dangerous.
- There is a risk of injury from accidents, especially when working at heights.
- You would normally work offshore for 2 or 3 weeks, followed by a 2 or 3 weeks' rest period on shore. This may affect your family life.
- There is often no mobile phone signal, but there are pay phones and usually internet access.
- Alcohol is banned on rigs, and there is random alcohol and drug testing.
- When offshore, you would normally work a 12-hour shift, including rest and meal breaks, with 12 hours off duty.
- Accommodation (usually shared cabins) and meals are provided free. There are usually good recreational facilities.

- You would wear protective and waterproof clothing. Employers provide all necessary safety equipment, such as thermal suits gloves, boots and a hard hat.
- You have to fly by helicopter between the rig or platform and onshore.

Getting In

- You may be able to get in without formal qualifications by starting as a roustabout (see the **Roustabout** Job Profile) and working your way up through the roles of roughneck, derrickhand and assistant driller to driller. Experience of manual labour can be useful.
- You will need a few years' experience in offshore operations before becoming an assistant driller.
- You must be at least 18 years of age to work offshore.
- To work offshore, you must pass an offshore survival course such as the Basic Offshore Safety Induction and Emergency Training Certificate (BOSIET). Contact OPITO for more details. Some people complete the course at their own expense before looking for work. In other cases, some companies sponsor new employees through the course.
- You may also have to undertake the Minimum Industry Safety Training (MIST) course.
- You should be fit, as this job involves climbing, lifting and using heavy equipment.
- You have to pass a medical examination at the start and then every 2 years.

The UK oil and gas industry is located mainly off the east coast of Scotland and England, although there are also fields west of Shetland and in the Irish Sea. Employers in the industry include operating companies (usually oil companies) that hold exploration and production licences, drilling companies with contracts to do drilling work and a wide range of other major contractors and companies offering specialist technical services. The main recruitment contacts in Scotland are in the Aberdeen area.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- good practical skills
- stamina
- good communication skills
- agility and a good head for heights
- excellent organisational skills
- a strong sense of responsibility
- an awareness of health and safety issues at all times.

You need to be able to:

- work outdoors in all weathers
- live on a rig or platform for long periods of time
- live and work as a member of a team
- observe regulations and follow instructions very carefully.

Training

- Your training may start with courses leading to the MIST and BOSIET certificates, if you do not already hold these. However, this is not an entry level job, so it is likely you will already hold them.
- Otherwise, you may begin with induction training ashore, covering information on the industry and the company, health and safety and skills training.
- You will complete one or more drilling qualifications approved by the International Well Control Forum (IWCF). Many employers state this as a requirement.
- Further on the job training takes place offshore on the oil rig or platform.
- You may attend further short courses from time to time.

Getting On

- After sufficient experience, you may move on to work as toolpusher or oil rig manager.
- You may then be able to progress to other management jobs.
- Many of the large companies in the oil and gas industry operate throughout the world, so you may be able to work overseas.
- Depending on the job market, you may need to move around, possibly abroad, for work and to advance your career.

More Information

Although some workers spend only a short time on the rigs, many others spend most of their careers – often 20 years or more – offshore.

Most of the major oil and gas reserves in the North Sea have been worked, but new technology is allowing the exploitation of smaller and more marginal fields.

There are also good opportunities for skilled and experienced workers in other parts of the world.

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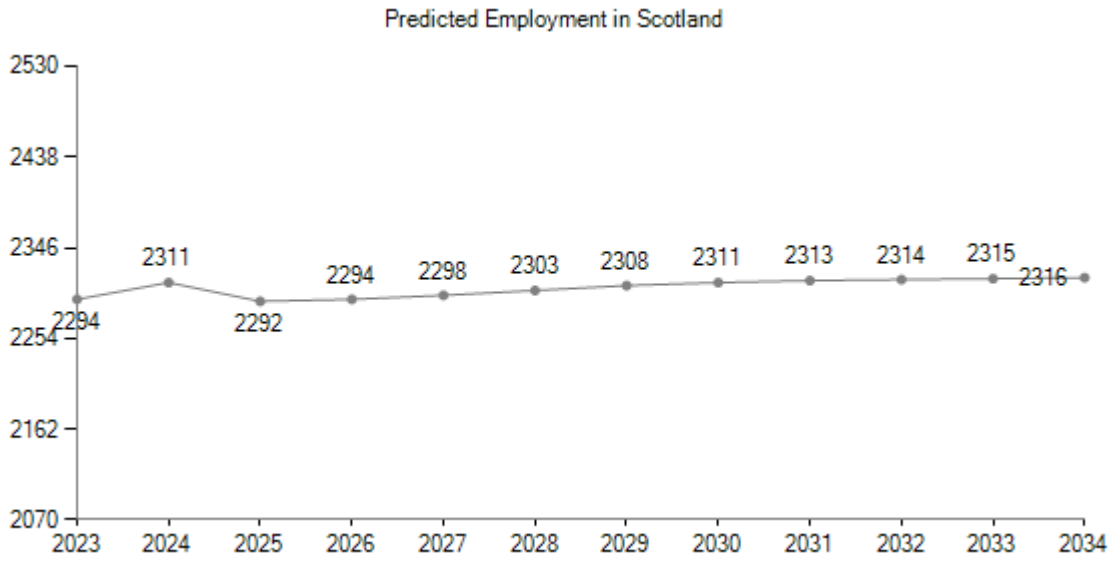
Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.



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