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## Stock Clerks and Order Fillers

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### Nature of the Work

Stock clerks and order fillers receive, unpack, check, store, and track merchandise or materials. They keep records of items entering or leaving the stockroom and inspect damaged or spoiled goods. They sort, organize, and mark items with identifying codes, such as price, stock, or inventory control codes, so that inventories can be located quickly and easily. They also may be required to lift cartons of various sizes. In larger establishments, where they may be responsible for only one task, they may be called *stock-control clerks*, *merchandise distributors*, or *property custodians*. In smaller firms, they also may perform tasks usually handled by shipping and receiving clerks. (A separate statement on shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks appears elsewhere in this section of the *Handbook*.)

In many firms, stock clerks and order fillers use hand-held scanners connected to computers to keep inventories up to date. In retail stores, stock clerks bring merchandise to the sales floor and stock shelves and racks. In stockrooms and warehouses, stock clerks store materials in bins, on floors, or on shelves. Instead of putting the merchandise on the sales floor or on shelves, order fillers take customers' orders and either hold the merchandise until the customers can pick it up or send it to them.

### Employment

Stock clerks and order fillers held about 1.6 million jobs in 2002; they were, by far, the largest material-recording, -scheduling, -dispatching, and -distributing occupation. About 75 percent work in wholesale and retail trade. The greatest numbers are found in grocery stores, followed by department stores. Jobs for stock clerks are found in all parts of the country, but most work in large urban areas that have many large suburban shopping centers, warehouses, and factories.

### Job Outlook

Employment of stock clerks and order fillers is projected to decline through 2012, due to the use of automation in factories and stores. Because the occupation is very large and many jobs are entry level, however, numerous job openings will occur each year to replace those who transfer to other jobs or leave the labor force.

The growing use of computers for inventory control and the installation of new, automated equipment are expected to inhibit growth in demand for stock clerks and order fillers, especially in manufacturing and wholesale trade industries whose operations are most easily automated. In addition to utilizing computerized inventory control systems, firms in these industries are relying more on sophisticated conveyor belts and automatic high stackers to store and retrieve goods. Also, expanded use of battery-powered, driverless, automatically guided vehicles can be expected.

Employment of stock clerks and order fillers who work in grocery, general merchandise, department, apparel, and accessories stores is expected to be somewhat less affected by automation, because much of their work is done manually and is difficult to automate. In addition, the increasing role of large retail outlets and warehouses, as well as catalogue, mail, telephone, and Internet shopping services, should bolster employment of stock clerks and order fillers in these sectors of retail trade.

### Related Occupations

Workers who also handle, move, organize, store, and keep records of materials include shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks; produc-



*Stock clerks and order fillers keep records of items entering or leaving the stockroom.*

tion, planning, and expediting clerks; cargo and freight agents; and procurement clerks.

### Sources of Additional Information

State employment service offices can provide information about job openings for stock clerks and order fillers. Also, see office and administrative support occupations and sales occupations, elsewhere in the *Handbook*, for sources of additional information.

(See introduction to the section on material-recording, -scheduling, -dispatching, and -distributing occupations for information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings.)