
Billing and Posting Clerks and Machine Operators

(0*NET 43-3021.01, 43-3021.02, 43-3021-03)

Nature of the Work

Billing and posting clerks and machine operators, commonly called *billing clerks*, compile records of charges for services rendered or goods sold, calculate and record the amounts of these services and goods, and prepare invoices to be mailed to customers.

Billing clerks review purchase orders, sales tickets, hospital records, or charge slips to calculate the total amount due from a customer. They must take into account any applicable discounts, special rates, or credit terms. A billing clerk for a trucking company often needs to consult a rate book to determine shipping costs of machine parts, for example. A hospital's billing clerk may need to contact an insurance company to determine what items will be reimbursed and for how much. In accounting, law, consulting, and similar firms, billing clerks calculate client fees based on the actual time required to perform the task. They keep track of the accumulated hours and dollar amounts to charge to each job, the type of job performed for a customer, and the percentage of work completed.

After billing clerks review all necessary information, they compute the charges, using calculators or computers. They then prepare itemized statements, bills, or invoices used for billing and recordkeeping purposes. In one organization, the clerk might prepare a bill containing the amount due and the date and type of service; in another, the clerk would produce a detailed invoice with codes for all goods and services provided. This latter form might list the items sold, the terms of credit, the date of shipment or the dates services were provided, a salesperson's or doctor's identification, if necessary, and the sales total.

Computers and specialized billing software allow many clerks to calculate charges and prepare bills in one step. Computer packages prompt clerks to enter data from handwritten forms, and to manipulate the necessary entries of quantities, labor, and rates to be charged. Billing clerks verify the entry of information and check for errors before the computer prints the bill. After the bills are printed, billing clerks check them again for accuracy. In offices that are not automated, *billing machine operators* run off the bill on a billing machine to send to the customer.

In addition to producing invoices, billing clerks may be asked to handle follow-up questions from customers and resolve any discrepancies or errors. And, finally, all changes must be entered in the accounting records.

Employment

In 2002, billing and posting clerks and machine operators held about 507,000 jobs. Although all industries employ billing clerks, the health services industry employs the most. About 1 in 3 billing clerks works in health services. Wholesale trade and retail trade industries also employ a large number of billing clerks.

Job Outlook

Employment of billing and posting clerks and machine operators is expected to grow more slowly than the average for all occupations through the year 2012. At the same time that computers are greatly simplifying the billing process and reducing the need for billing clerks, companies are putting greater emphasis on getting bills out faster in order to get paid more quickly. In addition, the fact that most billing clerks work in the fastest-growing sector of our economy (the health care sector) will generate more jobs for billing clerks in the future. But as the process becomes simplified, other people,

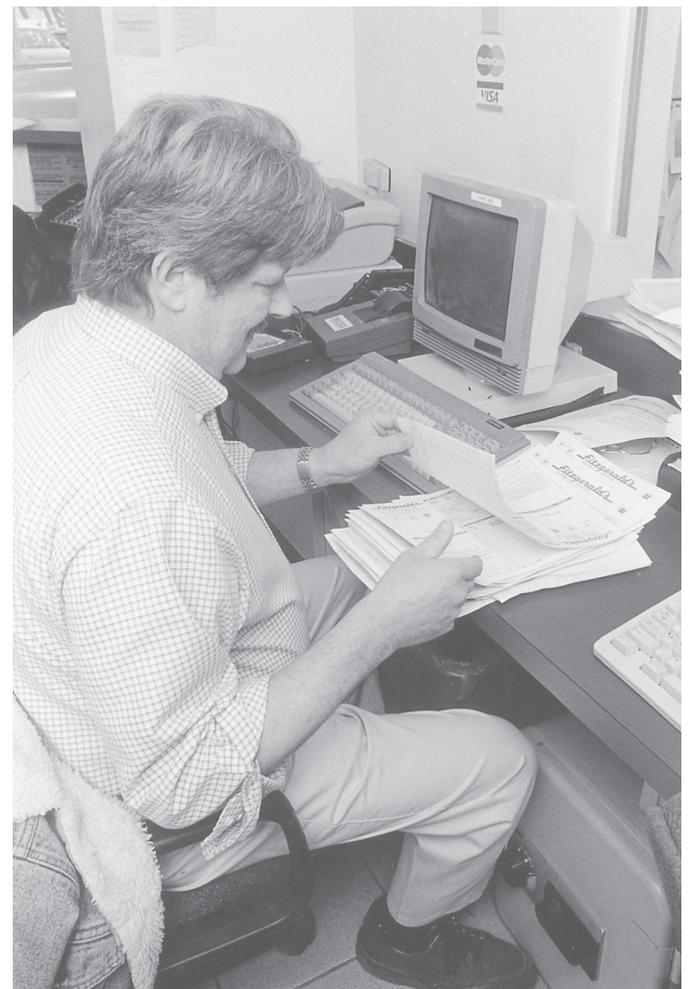
particularly accounting and bookkeeping clerks, are taking on the billing function. In addition to employment growth, many job openings will occur as workers transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force. Turnover in the occupation is relatively high, a not unexpected characteristic of an entry-level occupation requiring only a high school diploma.

Most of the employment growth will occur in the expanding health services industries and in accounting firms and other billing services companies, as a result of increased outsourcing of the service. Other areas will see declines as the billing function becomes increasingly automated and invoices and statements are automatically generated upon delivery of the service or shipment of goods. Bills also will increasingly be delivered electronically over the Internet, eliminating the production and mailing of paper bills. The health services area will see increasing automation, with more medical billers using electronic billing software to submit insurance claims to the insurer. Doing this speeds up the process and eliminates many of the coding errors to which medical bills are prone. The standardization of codes in the medical field also is expected to simplify medical bills and reduce errors.

Sources of Additional Information

Information on employment opportunities for billing clerks is available from local offices of the State employment service.

(See the introductory statement on financial clerks for information on working conditions, training requirements, and earnings.)



Billing clerks check invoice amounts for accuracy before mailing the invoice.