



Sterile Processing Technician

The sterile processing technician or instrument tech will perform a variety of duties including disassembly, cleaning and sterilizing, and correctly reassembling medical instruments that will be used for various surgical procedures. A typical hospital uses (and reuses) tens of thousands of medical instruments every month. Although some supplies are disposable, many are not. The reusable supplies come with their own special instructions for proper cleaning and maintenance.

Many healthcare workers are considered essential, but few are as important as sterile processing technicians. Without them, hospitals would not be able to function. Patients would not receive necessary surgeries, and many people would lose their lives from preventable infection or untreated medical diseases.

Technicians primarily work in hospitals or outpatient surgical centers. Most central processing centers are located in remote areas of the hospital or surgical centers giving the techs few opportunities to meet the patients they serve.

Normal work conditions will vary and will include exposure to offices, the sterile processing department, and operating rooms. Technicians come into contact with blood and body fluids and must be willing to wear and use personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate to the work environment. PPE may include gloves, liquid proof gowns, and face protection.

The sterile processing departments of most hospitals are active 24 hours a day.

Indiana Wage Information

	Entry	Median
Hourly Wage	\$12.84	\$14.78

Job Outlook in Indiana

Long term	17.2 % (increase)
Short Term	1.45 % (increase)

Source: OES 2014 Wage Estimates and Short (2014-2016) and Long Term projections (2012-2022)

Job Duties

- Verify and accurately document missing instruments according to standard operating procedures.
- Ensure that each instrument is in good working order prior to placing in tray for use.
- Clean instruments to prepare them for sterilization.
- Record sterilizer test results.
- Operate and maintain steam autoclaves, keeping records of loads completed, items in loads, and maintenance procedures performed.
- Effectively communicate with operating room personnel and others.
- Keep work area neat and clean.
- Make recommendations to management for possible improvement.
- Instrument and procedure tray assembly.

Important Qualities

Detail-oriented – must be aware of standard operating procedures; careful about detail and thorough in completing work tasks.

Dependability – must be reliable, responsible, dependable, and able to fulfill obligations.

Cooperation – must be pleasant with others on the job and display a good natured, cooperative attitude.

Independence – must develop one's own ways of doing things, guiding oneself with little or no supervision, and depending on oneself to get things done.

Stress tolerance – must be able to accept criticism and deal calmly and effectively with high stress situations.

Skills and Knowledge

Technical

- Knowledge of cleaning equipment such as ultrasonic washers and wall washers
- Knowledge of steam, VIP (Vaporized Hydrogen Peroxide) and ETO (Ethylene Oxide) sterilization
- Knowledge of sterilization test packs and accessories
- Knowledge of medical staff aprons or bibs
- Knowledge of proper packaging such as wraps, peel packs, and rigid containers
- Ability to understand the difference between sterilization and high-level disinfection
- Ability to communicate effectively with supervisors, coworkers, and operating room staff
- Ability to read and understand applicable Standard Operating Procedures

Certification and Advancement

Certification is not a government requirement in Indiana; however, many employers will require proof that you are certified prior to starting work or require certification shortly thereafter as a:

1. **Certified Registered Central Service Technician (CRCST)** – To qualify, you must have at least 400 hours of work experience as a sterile processing technician. Unlike other exams, you can accrue your experience before and after passing the exam as long as it is within six months. CRCST certification is offered through the International Association of Healthcare Central Service Material Management.
2. **Certified Sterile Processing and Distribution Technician (CSPDT)** – To qualify, you must complete a sterile processing technician training program. CSPDT certification is offered through the Certification Board for Sterile Processing Distribution.

The sterile processing technician is an entry-level position with excellent opportunities for upward mobility. With additional training and credentials technicians may advance into supervisory positions within their department or seek employment as a surgical technologist.

How can YOU get involved?

The world of work relies on the foundational skills students acquire in your classrooms and/or programs!

- Know your students'/clients' interests and career goals
- Affirm the value of the skills/hobbies students demonstrate both in and outside of the classroom
- Infuse your classroom culture and/or meetings with career-minded activities
- Provide time to make connections between the material learned in adult education or workshops and students' daily lives/career aspirations
- Know the basic job descriptions and training requirements of in-demand occupations in your area
- Know which WorkINDiana programs are available in your region
- Know the processes for referring students to postsecondary or on-the-job training