



“I get excited about going to work; it doesn’t really feel like a job. It’s very satisfying to repair a truck and know that you are one of the few people that can actually fix it and get everything moving again.”

Haley Pang Diesel Technology

CAREER QUICK LOOK

Years in Field
7 + years

City/State
Birmingham, AL

Specializations
Internal Engine Repair
- Paccar
- Cummins
Electrical

Degree
Certificate in Diesel
Technology

Career Goals
Master Diesel Technician

Personal Time
Spending time with friends,
her dogs and riding her
two horses



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Advice to Women Considering This Career:

“This is a fabulous career, it’s something you can be proud of! Don’t be scared. You can do it!”



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“One of the best things is every day is different and I have to solve a problem that I don’t know if I can solve.”

For more information

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Getting Started

Haley grew up working on four-wheel drive vehicles. Her grandfather was a truck driver, and she spent every summer with him. She loved hearing his trucking stories and helping him maintain his vehicles. One day, she realized that working on cars could be more than just a hobby. If she made it her career, she could get paid to do what she loved—solving problems and working on heavy-duty trucks.

Education/First Diesel Job

Haley got her first job at 17, at an off-road shop she patronized. She had already built a relationship with them after they did custom suspension work on her pick-up truck. To get her foot in the door she was willing to do just about anything — from sweeping the shop floor to changing the oil on the owner’s personal vehicles.

Haley also had some luck. Although she was doing menial work (as anyone starting in this industry should expect to) she was paired with a lead technician from day one. As a newbie, she found herself pulling engines, far bigger than anything she had experience with, out of trucks on her own. Given higher-level duties than a traditional entry-level helper, she gained skills quickly.

When she thinks about how she got through those early days, she points to the certificate in diesel technology that she was studying for at the time. Being the only woman on the shop floor isn’t easy—but her education gave her the confidence to handle whatever they threw at her.

Her experiences have made Haley a strong advocate for professional and technical education. She’s impressed by the state-of-the-art equipment and technology at Wallace State: current trucks, an online curriculum that supplements classroom lectures, and virtual reality simulation labs. In the simulation labs students get the chance to repair an engine “virtually,” before they even touch one in the lab. “That sounds amazing.” Says Haley, “I wish I could have experienced that when I went to school!”

Workplace

Haley specializes in internal engine repair and she mostly works on Paccars, a newer engine that few technicians are familiar with. “It’s the exact opposite of everything on the engine that most mechanics are used to working on.” She’s fortunate to have this specialized skill, along with expertise in Cummins engines. Still, she feels like she’s constantly winging it because trucks are always changing. That’s what she likes about being a technician – “it’s interesting, you must constantly use your knowledge to figure out why the truck isn’t running.”

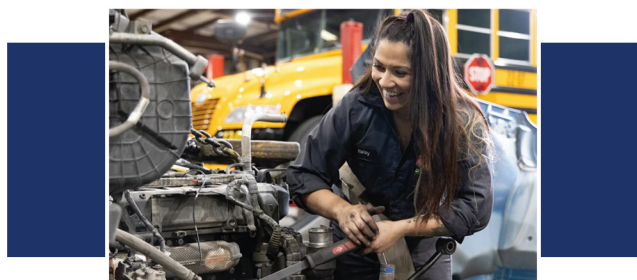
The heavy-duty trucks Haley fixes transport anything across the country, from medical supplies, to groceries, to farm equipment. Whether she can repair a truck quickly is what decides whether the cargo arrives at its destination on time and whether the truck driver makes any money that day: “If I take too long in the shop, it affects how he provides for himself and his family or herself and her family.” When she fixes a truck, customers are happy and she’s happy.

At the start of Haley’s career she worked with another female diesel technician who had been in the industry a long time. As a young mechanic she looked up to her—“if she can do all this work and get this far in the industry as a woman, then I know I can do it, too,” she thought to herself. Haley doesn’t know any other female technicians – so she’s pleased and excited to hear that there are six currently in the Diesel Tech program at Wallace State.

Career Ladder

Haley is working towards becoming a master technician, which would give her a significant pay increase. In the past, years of experience were the deciding factor in becoming a master technician, but these days educational credentials for specialized training and industry certifications are carrying more weight, benefiting young people like herself. She strongly recommends these industry certifications to move up the career ladder as a diesel tech, especially if you are a woman.

She emphasizes that you must have patience. She has been working for almost 8 years and is not a master technician yet, though she plans to be. The pay for master technicians is high \$30s and \$40s per hour, according to Haley. Apart from her first job, she has only ever worked at major dealerships and they all provide excellent benefits.



Work-Life Balance

In her off hours, Haley spends time with a big friendship group, who often work on vehicles together. At home, she has two dogs and two horses and she enjoys horseback riding.

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Working with Men

“I really love the environment of a shop - there’s a lot of joking and cutting up. It’s very laid back.”

But Haley also warns women that shop culture is rough. Guys are probably going to say things that you don’t want to hear and sometimes it may even be directed to you as a female. She’s had co-workers that were not too happy about a woman coming into the shop. She tries to not take it personally.

“For the most part, there is now a younger generation coming into the shop. Everyone’s been super supportive; they just treat me like one of the guys.”

Handling Heavy Equipment

At 4’ 10,” Haley is very petite in a profession that involves a lot of heavy lifting—after all, the average truck weighs 23,000 pounds.

“I work smarter not harder. In the shop we have forklifts and overhead cranes. It’s just a matter of figuring out how to use that tool so I can do a lot of the heavy lifting the guys do and not hurt myself.”

Barriers

“Everybody’s been very supportive for the most part, friends and family. My biggest problem has been customers who don’t want me to work on their truck.” At times she’s been called some inappropriate names.

She’s been fortunate to have good supervisors that support her. One told a customer, “You can take your truck somewhere else, or you can go to the back of the line and wait for one of the guys to become available.” At that point the wait for a technician was over a month, so the customer decided to go with her. Another supervisor told a customer, she’s our top Paccar tech on this shift at this time, would you rather have somebody that specializes in this or a guy who doesn’t specialize in it?” The customer chose Haley.

On the flip side, Haley’s family is extremely proud of her and loves what she does. Her brother constantly tells friends, “My little sister is 4’10” and she’s a mechanic – she works on 18 wheelers!”



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