



The printing industry offers fulfilling career opportunities with room to grow.

## KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING

By becoming a Flexographic Press Operator, you gain in-depth knowledge about the press and the printing process and learn how to handle, maintain, troubleshoot and manipulate printing factors such as ink and substrate. Printing is a trade that can be learned through on-the-job training and formal education. Press operators acquire the skills and knowledge they need in a number of ways—through high school and post-secondary programs (often associated with graphic design), apprenticeships and on-the-job learning. To find a list of schools and training providers, go to the CPISC website at [www.cpisc-csic.ca](http://www.cpisc-csic.ca)

## STEPPING STONES

The printing industry offers fulfilling career opportunities with room to grow. With experience, training and a good performance record, workers can move up to senior positions including senior press operator, lead hand, shop foreman/supervisor, and production manager. As well, press operators can move into other departments such as estimating and sales. Mastering the operation of a variety of presses can open many doors: you can also become an entrepreneur and start your own business.

Many of the skills you learn as a Flexographic Press Operator are transferable and can lead to success in other industries.

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

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OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE:

# FLEXOGRAPHIC PRESS OPERATOR

Ever wonder how they print words and pictures on plastic bottles or tin cans? They use a flexographic press. **FLEXOGRAPHIC ('FLEXO') PRESS OPERATORS** work fast, using quick-drying inks to produce high-quality materials at up to 600 metres per minute on a truly astonishing range of materials—from plastic films and textured papers to thick cardboards, rough-surfaced packaging materials, fabrics and metal foils. Operating a flexo press demands strong technical skills, a sharp eye, and a commitment to teamwork—all of which lead to career prospects throughout the printing industry.

*"If you're looking for active work, the flexo press is for you. It keeps you moving. And you enjoy almost instant satisfaction from seeing your work produced."*

- BRIAN KOLEWE, FLEXOGRAPHIC PRESS OPERATOR

Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council

## DID YOU KNOW?

Printing has a long history in Canada. The country's first printing business opened its doors nearly 300 years ago.

# PRINTING: A FIELD OF OPPORTUNITIES

Canada's fourth-largest source of manufacturing jobs, the printing and graphic communications industry extends from coast to coast, supporting 8,500 establishments nationwide and employing more than 90,000 men and women.

The industry has changed a lot over the last ten years. Technology and computers now play a major role in putting ink on paper.

Right now is a great time to consider entering the printing profession. Like many industries, printing is going to see a large number of employees retire in the coming years, creating demand for talented new workers.

### Why a career in printing?

- *Investment in the future:* the majority of printing firms have either recently invested or plan to invest in training, recruiting and upgrading skills to keep pace with the changes in technology
- *Opportunity:* nearly half of all printing jobs (47%) are in press operation and finishing departments
- *Compensation:* wages paid in printing have gone up consistently—more than 25% between 1997 and 2004
- *Innovation:* the printing industry has been a leader in adapting to new technologies

Look for forecasts for printing employment in the Labour Market Information section of the Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council (CPISC) website at [www.cpisc-csic.ca](http://www.cpisc-csic.ca)

Look around the grocery store and the packaging of nearly every product you see is likely to have come off a flexographic press.

# ON THE JOB

Flexography is a prominent printing process of the packaging industry because it can print on so many different types of materials—called 'substrate'—using a wide variety of inks. Look around the grocery store and the packaging of nearly every product you see is likely to have come off a flexographic press. New technologies have improved the quality of flexographic printing significantly in recent years, making flexographic products very much in demand.

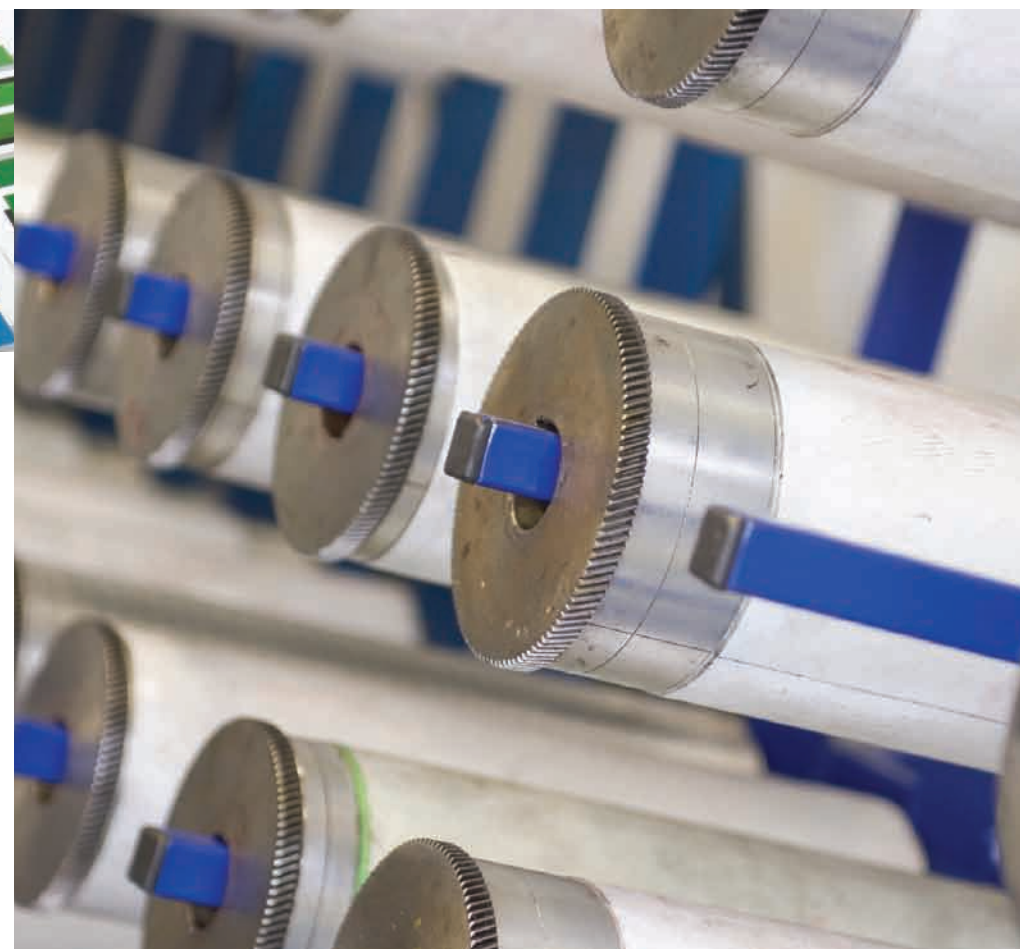
### How flexographic printing works

Flexographic printing is like stamping an image. The printing plate has raised elements and flat elements: the raised elements are the parts of the image that will be printed. A special roller inks the plate; the ink is then transferred from the plate to the substrate supported by an impression cylinder. There are various types of flexo presses each one having a different configuration and producing different products.



### Being a press operator

Whether running a flexographic press or some other type of press, the operator is in charge of the whole process, from preparation (called 'makeready') to final quality control as well as ensuring safety. Makeready includes setting up the ink unit, setting and adjusting the registration (or alignment), determining colour, density and ensuring overall readiness to print. Once printing has started, the operator's job is to monitor the consistency of printing. This is done by checking the substrate. Many of the skills you need to be a flexographic press operator are transferable to other types of presses.



# UP FOR THE TASK

All press operators must possess basic, core and operating skills to perform their duties. Each set of skills contributes to the position in different ways. The following are just a few examples taken from the skill standards developed and validated by industry professionals through the Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council (CPISC).

**BASIC SKILLS:** are essential in every occupation. They are also called enabling skills because they make it possible for workers to use and develop other skills.

**Reading:** Reading simple and brief work-related materials, e.g., labels

**Writing:** Writing short notes, e.g., log entries

**Mathematics:** Calculating fractions, e.g., ink ratios

**Interactive communication:** Listening to and understanding information, e.g., following verbal instructions

**Planning and organization:** Plan and organize activities, e.g., work area

**Decision making:** Making decisions in a timely manner

**Problem solving:** Identifying problems and their solutions

**Computer literacy:** Using computer software and equipment

**CORE SKILLS:** cover those elements that comprise a broad-based knowledge of the industry. For the most part, some will cut across process areas, although some may be more relevant to a particular process area.

**Teamwork:** Working collaboratively with others to achieve organizational goals

**Health and safety:** Adhering to health and safety and environmental standards, regulations and policies

**Printing process:** Understanding the steps involved in printing processes

**Workflow processes and control:** Adhering to production schedules and requirements

**Quality assurance:** Verifying accuracy and quality of work to ensure that products meet expectations

**Client service:** Providing service excellence to internal or external clients

**OPERATING SKILLS:** From preparing to print through press operation and maintenance, press operators must possess specific technical skills in order to:

Follow makeready checklists to prepare work for printing

Operate single and multicolour presses

Manage the variables that can affect printing quality such as web tension, temperature, speed of run, length of run and folder configurations

Troubleshoot problems as they arise

Ensure quality control

Maintain equipment and workspace to prevent downtime, maximize output and ensure health and safety

To access the complete list of press skill standards visit [www.cpisc-csic.ca](http://www.cpisc-csic.ca)