

Driller

Job Description

A free job description template for Australian mining operations

Company Name: _____

Location: _____

Employment Type: _____

Reports To: _____

Date: _____

DISCLAIMER

This driller job description template is designed to reflect Australian workplace standards and mining industry practices at the time of publication. Confirm the applicable modern award or enterprise agreement for your operation and ensure compliance with all relevant work health and safety and employment laws.

1. Position overview

A driller (also known as a drill rig operator or blast hole driller) operates drill rigs to bore holes on surface mines and, on some operations, underground. The role blends precise machine operation with disciplined safety practice in a demanding, remote environment.

Most drillers work in the surface mining and haulage stream and are typically classified around Level 2 to Level 4 under the Mining Industry Award 2020 (MA000011), which covers metalliferous mining and on-site processing. Production drillers bore blast holes for the drill-and-blast cycle, while grade-control, exploration, reverse-circulation (RC) and diamond drilling support ore definition and geology.

This template provides a foundation for creating clear, compliant job descriptions that attract skilled operators while setting appropriate expectations for the role. Once hired, manage crews and rosters efficiently with mining rostering software.

2. Key responsibilities

Rig operation

Operating drill rigs to bore blast holes for production drilling, plus grade-control, exploration, RC and diamond holes to the required pattern, depth and angle.

Rig set-up and levelling

Positioning, levelling and stabilising the rig on each drill pad, tramming safely between holes and completing pre-start inspections.

Hole accuracy

Maintaining hole accuracy, depth and alignment, managing collars and preventing hole collapse or deviation.

Consumables management

Managing drill rods, bits, hammers and other consumables, adding and breaking rods, and monitoring wear and performance.

Drill logging and reporting

Recording accurate drill logs, hole data and shift reports, and communicating results with drill-and-blast crews and geologists.

Safety and compliance

Conducting pre-starts, following ground-control and exclusion-zone rules, wearing PPE and complying with site work health and safety procedures.

3. Skills and attributes

- Technical operation: Confident operation of drill rigs and controls, mechanical aptitude and the ability to troubleshoot common rig faults.
- Precision: Accuracy in hole placement, depth and angle, with attention to drill patterns and grade-control tolerances.
- Safety focus: Strong hazard awareness, disciplined adherence to ground-control, exclusion-zone and isolation procedures.
- Endurance: Ability to sustain focus across 12-hour day and night shifts in a physically demanding, remote environment.
- Teamwork: Effective coordination with offsidiers, drill-and-blast crews, geologists and supervisors.
- Record keeping: Accurate completion of drill logs, hole data and shift reports for planning and compliance.

4. Qualifications and requirements

The qualifications for driller positions vary depending on the site, drilling type and whether work is on surface or underground. Some are mandatory, while others are preferred or desirable.

- Site inductions (required) — General and site-specific inductions completed before commencing work
- Driller competencies (required) — Recognised drilling competencies (for example RIIMPO drilling units) relevant to the rig and drilling type
- Working rights (required) — Eligibility to work in Australia
- HR driver's licence — Heavy Rigid licence is desirable for moving rigs and support vehicles
- Underground tickets — Underground competencies and inductions where the role involves underground drilling
- Previous drilling experience — Experience on production, RC or diamond rigs is advantageous but not always essential

5. Working conditions

- Fly-in fly-out (FIFO) or drive-in drive-out arrangements to remote sites
- Continuous roster of 12-hour day and night shifts
- Exposure to dust, noise, vibration and varied weather conditions
- Physically demanding work including handling rods, bits and consumables
- Mandatory PPE and strict site safety and fatigue-management requirements
- Extended time away from home on rotating swings

6. Award information

Mining industry award 2020

Most driller positions in Australia are covered by the Mining Industry Award 2020 (MA000011), which applies to metalliferous mining and on-site processing. This modern award sets minimum pay rates, penalty rates, allowances and conditions for mine site employees. View current Mining Award pay rates.

For FY2026/27 the award classifications range from the Introductory rate of \$27.53/hr up to Level 7 at \$37.62/hr, with drillers typically classified around Level 2 to Level 4. Casual employees receive a 25% loading. Many mining operations instead run an enterprise agreement that pays above award — always confirm which instrument applies. Use award interpretation software to calculate pay accurately.

Penalty rates and allowances

Under MA000011, penalty rates apply for Saturday work (150% for the first 3 hours, then 200%), Sunday (200%) and public holidays (250%). Shift loadings apply for afternoon and night work (+15%) and permanent night shift (+30%), and an underground allowance of \$2.06/hr applies where relevant. See overtime for how additional hours are paid.

Fatigue is a major factor on 12-hour continuous rosters, so build rosters that manage shift patterns and rest. The overtime and penalty rate calculator and shift cost calculator help you estimate the true cost of each shift before you commit.

7. Frequently asked questions

About the role

Q: What does a driller do on a mine site?

A driller operates drill rigs to bore holes on a mine site. On surface operations this includes production drilling of blast holes for the drill-and-blast cycle, plus grade-control, exploration, reverse-circulation (RC) and diamond holes. Drillers set up and level the rig, manage rods, bits and consumables, maintain hole accuracy and depth, record drill logs, and work closely with drill-and-blast crews and geologists. See our roster mining staff guide for how drill crews fit into site rosters.

Q: What award covers drillers in Australia?

Most drillers are covered by the Mining Industry Award 2020 (MA000011), which applies to metalliferous mining and on-site processing. Many larger operations instead run an enterprise agreement that pays above the award. Always confirm which industrial instrument applies to your operation.

Q: What classification level should I use for a driller?

Under the Mining Industry Award, drillers are typically classified around Level 2 to Level 4 depending on experience, the drilling type and level of autonomy. The award scale runs from an Introductory rate up to Level 7. See our Mining Award pay rates guide for current rates at each level.

Q: What is the difference between surface and underground drilling roles?

Surface drillers operate rigs on open-pit benches and pads for production, grade-control and exploration holes. Underground drillers work in confined development and production headings and require additional underground competencies and inductions. Underground work also attracts an underground allowance (around \$2.06/hr) under MA000011. This template focuses on the surface mining and haulage stream but can be adapted for underground roles.

Qualifications

Q: What tickets and competencies do drillers need?

Drillers generally need general and site-specific inductions plus recognised drilling competencies (for example RIIMPO drilling units) relevant to the rig and drilling type. A Heavy Rigid (HR) licence is often desirable for moving rigs and support vehicles, and underground competencies are required for underground roles. All candidates must have working rights in Australia.

Q: Do drillers need a driver's licence?

A car licence is generally expected, and a Heavy Rigid (HR) licence is desirable because drillers often move rigs, support vehicles and light vehicles around site. Requirements vary by operation, so confirm the licences your site expects and list them clearly as essential or desirable in the job description.

Q: Can I hire drillers without mine experience?

It is possible to bring on offsidiers or trainee drillers and develop them into rig operators, but production and RC/diamond drilling usually require prior competency and experience for safety reasons. Focus on recognised drilling competencies, mechanical aptitude, a strong safety record and availability for FIFO rosters. Clear job descriptions help candidates self-select appropriately.

Q: What qualifications should I require vs prefer for a driller?

Mandatory requirements typically include site inductions, relevant driller competencies and working rights in Australia. Preferred qualifications include an HR licence, previous experience on the specific rig type (production, RC or diamond) and underground tickets where relevant. Avoid over-specifying so you don't unnecessarily limit your candidate pool.

Employment

Q: Should I hire casual or permanent drillers?

This depends on your program and roster. Permanent employees suit continuous, long-term drilling programs and support retention on remote sites, while casuals offer flexibility for short campaigns but attract a 25% casual loading under the Mining Industry Award. Many operations use a mix of permanent crews and casual or contract drillers for peaks.

Q: What penalty rates apply to drillers?

Under the Mining Industry Award (MA000011), penalty rates apply for Saturday work (150% for the first 3 hours, then 200%), Sunday (200%) and public holidays (250%). Afternoon and night shifts attract a 15% loading and permanent night shift a 30% loading, with an underground allowance where relevant. Use award interpretation software or the overtime and penalty rate calculator to calculate pay accurately.

Q: How does FIFO affect a driller's employment?

Fly-in fly-out (FIFO) drillers work rotating swings on remote sites, typically on 12-hour day and night shifts. Employers usually cover flights, accommodation and meals, and must manage fatigue across the roster. Set out the swing pattern, shift length and travel arrangements clearly in the job description. See FIFO roster patterns explained and managing fatigue on mining FIFO rosters.

Q: What should I include in a driller employment contract?

Key elements include position title and classification level, employment type (casual/part-time/full-time), the applicable award or enterprise agreement, hourly rate or salary, FIFO and roster arrangements, main duties, site location, required tickets and competencies, and (for casuals) the casual loading percentage. Use our digital employment contracts to simplify this process.

Rostering

Q: How do FIFO rosters work for drillers?

FIFO drillers work fixed swings (for example even-time or two-and-one patterns) on continuous 12-hour day and night shifts. Rosters must balance production requirements with fatigue management and adequate rest between swings. Using mining rostering software helps you build compliant continuous rosters and give crews visibility of upcoming swings. See FIFO roster patterns explained for common patterns.

Q: How do I manage fatigue for drillers on 12-hour shifts?

Fatigue is a leading safety risk on continuous 12-hour rosters. Build rosters that limit consecutive night shifts, provide adequate rest between shifts and swings, and rotate day and night crews sensibly. Combine roster design with fatigue-management policies and monitoring. See managing fatigue on mining FIFO rosters and your mining WHS employer obligations.

Q: How do I track hours and costs for drill crews?

Use time and attendance to capture actual hours worked on site and award interpretation to apply the correct penalty rates and allowances automatically. The shift cost calculator helps you estimate the cost of each shift, including penalties and loadings, before you finalise the roster.

Q: How do I manage driller availability across swings?

Collect availability and swing preferences during onboarding and keep them updated. Use staff availability management tools to track when each crew member is on and off swing, and set clear policies for requesting changes. This simplifies roster creation and reduces last-minute gaps on remote sites.