

Washington Begins Program of Limited Apprenticeship

The Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council (WSATC) elected, Friday, July 16, 2004 to institute a new policy of "Limited" apprenticeship which allows contractors to employ apprentices on a specific jobsite without having to use apprentices on all contracts. This new apprenticeship option allows contractors to obtain registered apprentices from a state approved apprenticeship program in the area of the contract for which the contractor wants to use limited apprenticeship.

In the past, any contractor wishing to use apprentices had to sign a training agent agreement with an approved apprenticeship program. Often this proved to be a hardship for contractors who did multiple types of work in a single industry, for example commercial and residential electrical contracting. In this case, a contractor who signed an agreement with a construction electrical program would have to employ apprentices on all residential work as well as the commercial work. All apprentices would then be paid on the commercial scale rather than the residential one which is typically much lower.

This innovative new program begun by the WSATC is a bold step, encouraging contractors to use apprenticeship and showing them the value of employing trained apprentices over trainees. In this way, more opportunities for apprentices will be created. Equally important, the quality of electrical work throughout Washington will increase as apprenticeship grows.

Limited apprenticeship will also enable contractors who choose not to use apprentices on a regular basis to be able to compete for prevailing wage work on which there is an apprenticeship utilization requirement. At this time there are many federal, state and local governmental contracts which require the use of apprentices. Since there are currently a limited number of contractors who participate in apprenticeship training, only those contractors can meet the requirements of the bid package. Thanks to the establishment of limited apprenticeship the number of contractors able to bid on prevailing wage contracts will increase, and through natural competition should reduce or at least control the overall cost of government contracts to the general public.

Independent Electrical Contractors of Washington (IEC), the only statewide electrical apprenticeship program, is very excited about this new opportunity to increase apprenticeship and provide greater service to contractors in general. They believe this new category of training contractor will benefit not only the apprenticeship community, but contractors and people throughout Washington. IEC commends the WSATC for their courage in taking this bold step.

Quarterly, the Council meets to review the performance of apprenticeship program throughout

the state and to consider new initiatives for the improvement, advancement and promotion of apprenticeship. The next meeting of the WSATC will be October 21-22, 2004 at the Davenport Hotel in Spokane.

For more information on electrical apprenticeship, contact IEC of Washington at 11630 Airport Road, Suite 300, Everett, WA 98204, 800-595-0900, traindir@iec-etf.org or on the web at www.iec-etf.org.

IEC of Washington: Building on the Future

By Jolie Estes, Training Director, ETF of Washington

IEC of Washington apprenticeship program continues to grow and improve. With over 210 apprentices throughout Washington, IEC is the only state-wide program. The latest expansion to the program is a school opening this year in Spokane. Not only have we begun an apprenticeship program in the far eastern corner of the state, a new IEC chapter was formed, promoting opportunities for the merit-shop contractor.

Closer to home, however, IEC continues to push the envelope. The Puget Sound Chapter and the IEC of Washington are exploring a joint opportunity to increase services to contractors and apprentices alike by leasing a building in the Tacoma area. This joint prospect would allow the Puget Sound Chapter to have offices and conference room space and would provide classroom space for apprentices where appropriate and adequate lab training could be conducted.

In Everett, IEC of Washington has moved into a new location which will provide proper classroom, lab and lecture hall facilities for classes and will provide professional, secure offices for the administration of the program. Additionally, this new facility will allow the IEC to conserve financial resources by eliminating the need for contracting outside space for meetings and large classes. It is expected the new facility will be fully functional by mid-August.

The Board of Directors for IEC of Washington have committed to expanding the apprenticeship program to better target the needs of the industry and provide more career options for apprentices. With this goal in mind, they are moving toward the establishment of both Residential and Voice-Data-Video (VDV) training programs. Contractors who are interested in these exciting new training programs are encouraged to contact the IEC of Washington office for more information or to assist in the development of these programs.

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