

Boilermakers union offers new learning opportunities

You might not know it, but boilermakers earn a good living in one of the fastest growing jobs in the United States.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects employment to grow 21 percent by 2020. Median pay is \$54,640. That's pretty good compared to the \$45,790 median for all occupations.



Augustine Pulido (left) and Brian Willie (right) "buddy" welding.

Best of all, you can be trained to become a boilermaker without acquiring a huge student loan. The Boilermakers Local 627 offers an apprenticeship program to teach the skills necessary to become a safe journeyman boilermaker.

"These guys are actually paid to learn," says Wes Hevener, Local 627's assistant business manager. "And we not only teach them construction skills, but we also teach them to work well with others and to be good citizens."

Apprentices must complete 144 hours of classroom training for every 1,500 hours they work. The Local recognizes previous experience, such as college welding classes, when it comes to placing apprentices in the appropriate rung of the program.

To become a journeyman, apprentices must finish 6000 on-the-job hours to graduate, and depending on the apprentice it can take anywhere from 3 to 6 years to complete the program.

Jacob Evenson, Local 627 business manager, is a third generation boilermaker.

"It's not an industry that many people know about, and that's why most of our members get in through another family member, my grandpa actually started in 1948." says Evenson.

Richard Lerma, a Local 627 classroom instructor, finds the work rewarding in part because of the knowledge he's building and sharing.

"I like working hard, but everything I know, I really owe it to the training that the Boilermakers Local 627 has given me," says Lerma.



He says he eventually wants to be a project manager where he's doing the bidding on the jobs.

The Local has about 500 members, of which 72 are apprentices. Members live in Arizona, Hawaii and New Mexico.



Wesley Dale arc gouging.

A positive for some members is the ability to travel to jobs all around the country doing heavy industrial work, such as rigging. But travel can be a challenge, too. Work also can be inconsistent at times, as some jobs only last a few months.

"During that time, you are working 7 days a week, and you have to balance your time so that you can take care of your family, bills and laundry," says Evenson.

That leads to some of the members picking up other construction jobs on the side, he says. "That's how they're able to get by during the slower months."

That's why the boilermakers emphasize skills development.

"The more credentials you have the more valuable you are to the customer, to yourself and to the Local," says Evenson.

Local 627 also supports current and future members through the Helper program.

Hevener says the Local saw a real need for helpers (non-members or pre-apprentices) to know the basics of the job.

"We want to give people on our intent list that are not apprentices yet, the opportunity to get training before they even step foot on a job," says Hevener.



Dale Bowman stud welding.

The Helper program credential allows helpers to do everything except for weld and rig by themselves or supervise.

Some of the 120-hour Helper program highlights are

- OSHA 30 training
- Rigging modules training
- 40 hours in the shop

- Basic skills such as setting up a torch
- Learning about different tools

Another exciting development is the Local's transition to web-based classroom instruction.

Members now have the opportunity to take online courses ranging from math and geometry to learning about how substance abuse affects the body and work life.

“Additionally, we're working with another Local to try and put together an in-depth money management course, because we know how important all this material is (to the success of our Local),” says Hevener.



Boilermakers training on their new rigging module.

Learn More

Address 2345 W. Thomas Rd., Phoenix, AZ

Phone 602.495.1282

Number of Apprentices 72 in Arizona, Hawaii and New Mexico

Apprentice wages Start at 70% of journeyman rate, \$23.70 per hour plus benefits

Number of class hours and work hours required to turn out 6,000 on-the-job hours