

Boilermakers Tradition of Excellence on Display at Common Arc Welding Certification

PHOENIX -- On a Tuesday morning in September, hundreds of apprentices and contractors from across the nation arrived at Boilermakers Local 627's training center to test their welding skills in order to become certified in common arc welding—critical for much of the work Boilermakers perform on the jobsite. Many apprentices were testing for the first time, others had been down this road before.

The welding booths flickered with light as tubes and plates were welded, meanwhile the hoots and hollers of contractors and apprentices alike bounced across the concrete floors. The training center was packed; it was obvious that Local 627's common arc welding test draws a large crowd from all over



America. Testers and contractors from California to Wyoming were in attendance. Bringing contractors and apprentices to one central location each year eliminates the need for job-site testing, saving contractors and apprentices both time and money.

Tomas Valencia arrived on behalf of Industrial Contractors, inc. out of Bismark, ND. He stood at a table full of bent plates, inspecting them for weld quality and any impurities in the weld. Valencia pointed out a small bubble at the apex of a bent plate and tossed the failed plate into the reject pile.

In order to pass, the welded plates and tubes must be of top quality. Any impurities or imperfections will result in a failed test. Apprentices who fail any part of the test will have to find another local to retest.

“A lot of contractors actually require more training if an apprentice fails” Boilermakers Local 627's Jacob Evenson explained. It is part of the commitment to craftsmanship that the Boilermakers Union and their contractors teach in apprenticeship. There will be no skating-by on these tests. You either pass, or you start all over.

Of the 250 testers, Evenson reached a pass rate of about 65% that week—their goal is to get to 70% for next year's test. This lofty goal is achievable with well-trained apprentices who attend a strong apprenticeship program, like the one the Boilermakers have built.

The stress can be high as testers move from station to station, eventually landing at the last part of the test—the tube weld. Evenson calls it “The Heartbreaker”.



“It's the last and arguably most difficult part of the test. But if they can't pass this part, they fail the whole thing and have to retest at a later date,” Evenson noted.



Paul Clark, an instructor at the training center added, "It really is heartbreaking to make it this far and fail on the last part, but they'll have to recover, retrain and retest. We can't compromise our standards."

For 3rd year apprentice Danielle Manygoats, the heartbreaker proved to be no problem. "I passed my tube welding test, which was the last piece I needed before I can weld in the field." She and the rest of those who passed will be found welding on Boilermaker jobsites in the near future to carry on the Boilermaker tradition of excellence.

Learn more about the Boilermakers Local 627 apprenticeship program by visiting <http://www.boilermakers627.com/>.