

Leading the Green Revolution

The Green Energy Revolution is fully underway. And leading the charge for American workers are the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), who together have created the country's largest training program in energy alternatives, comprehensive and poised to keep the nation atop a rapidly greening world.

According to a recent report from the American Solar Energy Society, the renewable energy and energy efficiency industries have already generated 8.5 million U.S. jobs and could grow to as many as 40 million by 2030, encompassing one out of every four workers and producing up to \$4.5 trillion in revenue.

"These new jobs are not just engineering-related, but include millions of jobs in construction and maintenance," says IBEW president Ed Hill. "The Green Revolution of the 21st century is opening a sweeping set of opportunities for

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American workers unseen in this country since the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century."

Indeed, a study from the Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley, concluded that renewable energy generates "more jobs per megawatt of power installed, per unit of energy produced, and per dollar of investment than the fossil fuel energy-based sector." And despite some job losses in the switchover, the gain for union workers is overall positive, with four jobs created



Wind turbines installed by IBEW Local 48 rise for miles in North Central Oregon.



Solar panels installed by IBEW Local 103 atop the visitor's center on Spectacle Island in Boston Harbor.

for every three lost.

"These green jobs are especially good for American workers because they can't be outsourced," says Hill. "You can't ship an office building overseas to have solar panels installed. The work remains right in our own communities."

And yet, the United States, once a world leader in renewable energy technology, is slipping behind Japan, Germany and Spain in the race to go green. Germany, a country half the size of Texas, today employs more than 40,000 workers in the wind energy industry alone. The American Wind Energy Association estimates that nationwide the U.S. employs only about 20,000 people in wind power -- and that 90 percent of the turbines installed come from overseas.

What concerns American businesses and governments is having the right infrastructure in place to train a sufficient number of green workers, to keep pace with the world. Yet, through their National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee, NECA and IBEW have found a winning combination to produce the skilled new-energy electricians needed to fill the burgeoning, highly specialized green jobs. Through the advanced course offerings of a nationwide network of state-of-the-art training centers, apprentices and journeymen alike are honing the skills demanded by an ever-changing industry.

Says E. Milner Irvin, president of NECA, "Taking steps now to prepare for the jobs that are coming is critical for future success. But we don't need to reinvent the training wheel. NECA and IBEW have the mechanism in place right now. And knowing where our nation's interests in alternative energies lie, and producing the strongest possible workforce, will keep us all at the head of the line."

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