

Midwest Utility and Pipeline Training Center
at
Barton County Community College

Certificate Program/Degree Title: Natural Gas Transmission and Distribution Technician

Certificate Hours: Level 1 – 18 Credits, Level 2 – 32 Credits

Job Outlook: Kansas' natural gas pipeline includes more than 2600 miles of transmission lines and 21,000 miles of main distribution lines for 120 natural gas companies that provide service to approximately 932,000 gas customers. The current workforce, charged with maintaining the integrity of these lines, includes approximately 7486 workers, of which approximately 50% are expected to retire in the next five years.

The energy industry has identified an existing skilled labor shortage that threatens to interfere with the safe transmission and distribution of natural gas. In addition to a looming lack of skilled employees, newly implemented federal regulations and advances in technology require the retraining of the incumbent work force.

Wage Outlook: Entry level wages for this industry start at \$25,700 annually (not including benefits); with training and some experience that wage increases to between \$30,000 - \$35,000 annually. With specialized training and 2 to 3 years experience these jobs pay from \$40,000 - \$50,000 per year, depending upon region. Employees with 3 or more years experience and appropriate training will earn over \$50,000 annually depending upon their location and area of expertise.

Use of the Facility: The dedicated classroom will be used to provide training to prepare the emergent workforce as well as to maintain state and federal compliance for the incumbent workforce; opportunities for employee advancement; and customized training. The classroom is designed to accommodate the natural gas industry, and can also be used for other technical training related to this and similar industry applications.

High School Interest: Six high schools in Barton's service area have indicated an interest the certificate and degree program offered through the Midwest Utility and Pipeline Training Center. They are: Ellinwood, Ellsworth, Otis, Pawnee Heights, Chase and Victoria.

Local/Regional/National Appeal: The Midwest Utility and Pipeline Training Center is the direct result of industry request. For 22 years, Barton has provided continuing education for the natural gas pipeline industry through their annual corrosion seminar. In 2003, representatives from Midwest Energy, Atmos Energy, Kansas Municipal Utilities/City of Winfield, Kansas Gas Service, and the Kansas Corporation Commission Office of Pipeline Safety approached Barton to build this program in order to 1. Meet the needs of the incumbent workforce regarding mandated Operator Qualified Training and 2. Recruit and Train an emergent workforce in order to create a skilled workforce able to meet the demands of the natural gas industry as they face a 50% retirement rate. The statistics addressed in the Job Outlook section apply to Kansas alone. The companies represented on the steering committee represent 11 states – vastly increasing not only the

numbers of current employees who require training but also the replacement workforce to address the retirement rate. According to the American Gas Association (*THIS ARTICLE IS IN THE MARCH 2006 AMERICAN GAS ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE ON PAGE 29*) unless a skilled workforce is recruited and trained to meet the deficit caused by retirement, the safe and efficient transmission and distribution of natural gas in this country is threatened.

Distance Education Opportunities: Due to the scope of this industry, this training is suited for ITV and online training. Companies are currently working with some online training providers, and have ITV experience. However, most CEOs indicate that for this industry and the demands of the job, there will also be the need for hands-on training using equipment, the cathodic protection field, and live training scenarios.