

BizFed Bounce Back



BizFed members share stories of resilience.

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In the face of COVID19, BizFed members bounce back with perseverance, creativity and resourcefulness.

WECA: TRAINING IS A PATH TO RECOVERY

As the COVID-19 outbreak closed schools and left many teachers, parents, administrators and students wondering how to adapt to distance learning, the Western Electrical Contractors Association seized the moment.

WECA--as an association of merit shop electrical contractors, as well as a trade school that provides training programs, strong political and public affairs efforts, and specialized member services to California's electrical industry--had been providing both onsite and online learning for years and was well-positioned to respond quickly to the COVID-19 outbreak and Governor Newsom's stay-at-home order.

"This considerable head start enabled us to rapidly convert our onsite apprenticeship classes to online delivery when everything began escalating so quickly in early-mid March," said Michelle Gilkey, Director of Marketing/Communications, Learning, and Product at WECA.

From its headquarters in the Sacramento suburb of Rancho Cordova, WECA's staff has developed a training program that is fully online to assume the training responsibilities of locations throughout Southern California, including San Diego and Riv-



Neil Pesarillo- Low Voltage Apprenticeship instructor, WECA

erside. WECA plans to open a Fresno location by the end of the year.

How to Replenish the Ranks

Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, access to training was an issue for the industry. It's an investment in one's employees that is sometimes hard for businesses to see, but is ever more important as older electricians retire and need to be replaced with the next generation.

Training improves retention, quality, productivity and safety. Plus, training through apprenticeships is debt-free and "an excellent alternative to a four-year degree," Gilkey said.

"We believe that effective training, using all of the latest jobsite and learning technologies, is our secret weapon in attracting young people

into these trades," Gilkey said.

Post COVID-19 World

As part of the construction trades that have been largely deemed essential during the extreme social distancing policies of the present, electrical contractors are still working. But the new COVID-19 health and safety protocols are likely to stay in some form in a post-COVID-19 world.

"We welcome an ever-increased focus on jobsite safety," Gilkey said.



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