

The Ironworker Apprenticeship Certification Program

The Apprenticeship and Training Department is implementing a certification program for local union apprenticeship programs. The **Ironworker Apprenticeship Certification Program** (IACP) is designed to improve and standardize the quality of apprenticeship training offered at local unions to help ensure that graduates are skilled Ironworkers able to meet the needs of our employers, contractors and our Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees (JATC) and Trade Improvement Committees (TIC). The Apprenticeship and Training Department will grant certification to all local union apprenticeship programs that comply with the evaluation procedure, meet established standards, and adhere to the IACP policies and procedures.

Certification is a method of ensuring that an Ironworker apprenticeship program meets or exceeds all established standards and requirements in areas such as implementing the core curriculum, ensuring instructors have appropriate credentials, maintaining appropriate training facilities, providing access to current tools and equipment, ensuring safety of apprentices, and providing on-the-job training to prepare skilled Ironworkers.

There are many reasons for implementing this certification program:

- Certifies that an apprenticeship program has met established standards.
- Enhances the credibility of the apprenticeship program with contractors.
- Creates goals for self-improvement and stimulates apprenticeship programs to seek higher standards.
- Involves the coordinator and instructors in strengthening their own program.
- Strengthens apprenticeship programs at the local, district and international levels.
- Provides the public with a positive image and validates that an apprenticeship program meets or exceed high standards.
- Helps prospective apprentices in making a decision to become an Ironworker.

- Provides external peer-review to verify apprenticeship program quality.
- Keeps apprenticeship coordinators and instructors knowledgeable and in step with current practices.
- Facilitates linkages with colleges and universities.
- Facilitates the process for apprentices to receive college credit and pursue degrees through Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana and the National Labor College.

The IACP involves three phases: internal evaluation, external evaluation and a recommendation for certification. During the internal evaluation the local union (JATC/TIC, coordinator, instructors, contractors) will do a comprehensive examination of all aspects of their apprenticeship program. This process involves apprentices, instructors, the coordinator and possibly local contractors, all of whom contribute to the creation of a report detailing their findings.

After the internal evaluation, a site visit will be conducted to assess strengths and weaknesses of the program. This consists of a team (international representatives, coordinators from certified programs) that examines data and conducts interviews to determine if the program is in compliance with established criteria. When internal and external evaluations are complete, final recommendations are made. This report is used to determine whether to grant, continue or withdraw certification.

The foundation of the IACP includes eight standards. Each of these standards includes a number of items that are examined by both the internal and external evaluation teams. These eight standards include:

STANDARD 1 – PURPOSE AND ADMINISTRATION – The apprenticeship program should have clearly stated goals related to the needs of the apprentices and the contractors served and the JATC/TIC program administration should ensure that training activities support and promote these goals.

STANDARD 2 – LEARNING RESOURCES – Learning and training materials, consistent with program goals, knowledge and skill objectives, and the core curriculum should be available to instructors and apprentices.

STANDARD 3 – APPRENTICE SERVICES – Systematic selection and record keeping procedures should be used.

STANDARD 4 – INSTRUCTION – Classroom and shop instruction should be systematic and reflect program goals. Course syllabi that include knowledge and skill objectives should be used to implement the core curriculum.

STANDARD 5 – EQUIPMENT – Equipment and tools used should be of the type and quality found in the ironworking trade and should also be the type needed to provide training to meet the program goals and knowledge and skill objectives.

STANDARD 6 – FACILITIES – The physical facilities at the training center should be adequate to permit achievement of the program goals and knowledge and skill objectives.

STANDARD 7 – INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF – The instructional staff should have the required technical and training skills competency and meet all state and local requirements for certification.

STANDARD 8 – JOB TRAINING – Written policies and procedures should be in place to provide guidance for the job training component of the apprenticeship program.

During November and December of 2005 the IACP was pilot tested at our three regional training centers in California, Missouri and Northern New Jersey. All three centers successfully complete the certification process.

Copies of all IACP materials are being sent to local unions and those locals interested in immediate certification are encouraged to contact the Apprenticeship and Training Department to begin the process. Our goal is to conduct certification site visits to all local union apprenticeship programs in the United States and Canada by the end of 2007.

Please contact the Apprenticeship and Training Department at 202-383-4889 for more information regarding the **Ironworker Apprenticeship Certification Program**.

Captions for photos:

#1: Dick Zampa Jr (left) and Dana Fairchild (center) of the Oakland, California regional training center review certification materials with Dr. Jerry Wircenski of the University of North Texas.

#2: Frank Piccione (left) from the International tours the Northern New Jersey regional training center with Ron Repmann.

#3: Frank Piccione (left) tours the welding shop at the St. Louis regional training center with Joe Hunt III.