TRAINING news

UA Education and Training Department

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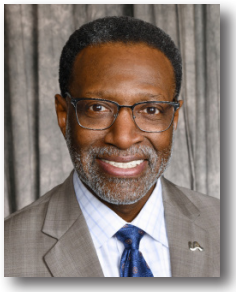
Message from Raymond W. Boyd
Director of Education and Training



The Urgency for Supervision

We are noticing a critical need for supervision on our jobsites. There are several reasons why this is happening. One could say the stress of running work is not worth it. Someone else might say they've never been given the opportunity. Other factors might be the money. Then there's the saying that I just want to come in and do my job, I don't want to take anything home with me.

We're hearing from our signatory contractors and end-users how hard it is to find the proper supervision to run the work that's ahead of us. The United Association has been working on this for a long time, trying to come up with a program that can assist our local unions in developing the skilled, qualified supervision that's needed to carry us into the future. I think all of us can remember someone in our past who ran a job we worked on and made it look easy.

The United Association produced a UA Foreman training manual almost 20 years ago with the hope that this would be a blueprint for our training centers to educate

Inside this Issue

Mission Statement

The mission of the UA Education and Training Department is to equip United Association locals with educational resources for developing the skills of their apprentices and journeypersons. By thus facilitating the training needs of the membership, we maximize their employability and prepare them for changes in the industry. We are committed to making training opportunities available across North America, allowing members to acquire new skills and remain competitive in the industry regardless of geography. In this way, we are determined to meet the needs of the piping industry and enhance employment opportunities for our members, while remaining fiscally responsible to the beneficiaries of the fund.

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our membership. This manual came with foreman certification, and at that time, we thought that was the way we should go. As we look back now with some of the data and being able to track the usage of the UA Forman manual certification program, it's not used as widely as we would like it to be.

Most of our foremen or members who are in a supervisory position are selected by our signatory contractors. Not to say that it doesn't happen, but we rarely get manpower calls for certified foremen. Most of these positions are grown within the company. One thing we are actively looking at is how we can implement a leadership program early in the apprenticeship to educate our members on the importance of supervision. We feel as though introducing this as early as possible will give the member a clear understanding of the importance of supervision and leadership on the job, and what it takes to obtain a position like that. The UA and MCAA are working closely together to come up with another training manual that will eliminate the certification but give an in-depth knowledge of the importance of supervision at every level in the construction industry.

The duties and responsibilities of being a foreman include the understanding of soft skills, understanding and resolving conflicts as they arise on a project, proper documentation and record-keeping, and understanding the challenges of mental health in the workplace. These are just a few of the things that we hope to focus on as we begin work on this new training manual.

There are many members who seek the opportunity to run jobsites and be in supervisory positions, and it is our responsibility to provide them with the tools required to be successful. It's considered a badge of honor to be asked to run and finish a project, or be in the fortunate position to be granted a company truck, for example. Our training responsibility extends to motivating and finding individuals who would be interested in seeking these challenging, but rewarding, positions.

We owe it to ourselves and the organization to make sure that we are mentoring the next group of leaders who will continue to lead this organization into the future. Within the next year, we hope to have a new leadership manual that will be put together by subject matter experts. There will be more information to follow as our progress continues with this important venture.

Preparing for the Future

Submitted by Michael Galfano, Assistant Director of Education and Training

I hope this newsletter finds each of you well as we prepare for a busy 2026 training schedule. Since 2019, I have been on staff with the International Training Fund as a Pipefitter Training Specialist and currently serve as Assistant Director of Education and Training. When I speak to people about the UA and skilled trades, one word always comes to mind—opportunity.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines opportunity as (1) a favorable juncture or circumstance and (2) a good chance for advancement or progress.

Think of all the opportunities and benefits we have as United Association members.

Being an instructor for 19 years at my home local was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It is fulfilling to have the opportunity to share your knowledge and skills to help your fellow brothers and sisters. I felt a sense of pride knowing I contributed to an apprentice's development. I have had the opportunity to co-teach with some of my mentors who were my instructors when I was an apprentice. They had a profound impact on me getting involved with training. I have also had the opportunity to co-teach with some of my former apprentices. To be an instructor is to accompany, and there is no greater privilege.

As many of you know, the ITF hosts the Future Instructors Program, which is held in Ann Arbor each year during the Instructor Training Program. Locals select one apprentice, in their fourth to fifth year, who may have the ambition and desire to teach at their training centers. This week provides multiple networking opportunities and exposure to motivational speakers, UA leadership, and

peer mentors. Apprentices also attend professional development courses for planning, teaching, and assessing effective lessons. This program allows attendees to witness firsthand the power of the Instructor Training Program. This initiative allows the United Association to build a strong future with the best instructors for many years to come. I have always supported training and mentoring our future replacements as a way for our organization to prepare for the future. Collectively, we all have a responsibility to train and mentor our members, whether in a classroom or on a jobsite.

Since this program's inception in 2022, 485 apprentices have had the opportunity to attend the Future Instructors Program, and 112 (23 percent) have enrolled as ITP instructors after graduating from their apprenticeship. This program is working.

I would encourage you to identify an apprentice in your program who would like to get involved with training and offer them the opportunity to participate in this incredible program. The ITF will be providing a grant to help support locals. More information will be forthcoming.

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend my local's in-house apprentice contest in January. It was wonderful to spend time with some of my former co-instructors and former apprentices. I was proud to see a few of my former apprentices involved and teaching in both full-time and part-time capacities. I applaud my local for giving these young journeyworkers opportunities to be involved in training. With these new instructors, they are preparing for the future training needs of the local.

As we have all heard, the UA is experiencing incredible job growth in every sector of our industry, including the commercial, data center, energy, healthcare, industrial, infrastructure, and semiconductor sectors, to name a few. This work will provide our members with many job opportunities for years to come.

As we approach the 2026 ITP, I would encourage all directors and coordinators to evaluate their current training programs and needs. Do you have your certification programs established? Do you have co-instructors to cover classes? Do you have any instructors retiring soon, and are there potential training gaps? Will you need to hire additional instructors? Have you updated your technology courses and equipment? Are you preparing for specialized training to support work coming to your jurisdiction? Do you have to adjust your training schedules and start offering more classes during the week? Are your curricula and standards up to date? Are you utilizing UA/ITF resources? Will you send your instructors to the Regional and Instructor Training Program?

In closing, I challenge you to reflect on the opportunities that brought you to this point in your career. Perhaps somebody took a chance on you and gave you an opportunity to show your skills and hone your craft. Think about that next apprentice in your local and their potential to carry our union into the future. To whom will you give that opportunity?

Peter Larou, Mike Galfano, Brian Larou, Local 597

As we prepare for 2026, I believe that as educators, it is important to revisit our mission statement:

"The mission of the UA Education and Training Department is to equip United Association locals with educational resources for developing the skills of their apprentices and Journey workers. By thus facilitating the training needs of the membership, we maximize their employability and prepare them for changes in the industry. We are committed to making training opportunities available across North America, allowing members to acquire new skills and remain competitive in the industry regardless of geography. In this way, we are determined to meet the needs of the piping industry and enhance employment opportunities for our members, while remaining fiscally responsible to the beneficiaries of the fund."

I have had the honor and privilege not only to teach Peter and Brian Larou as apprentices, but to work with them as instructors when they became journeymen. Both are former INAC welding champions and instructors at their local. Peter also teaches welding courses at ITP, and Brian is the journeyman welder helper for the INAC. Words cannot express how proud I am of these gentlemen. Their paths started with an opportunity.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, and let me know if I can be of any assistance: mgalfano@uanet.org.

Water Mist for Fire Protection

Submitted by Derek Miles, UA Training Specialist

In 2026, our Special Hazards training program at the Instructor Training Program will introduce a new offering: 7003 Water Mist for Fire Protection. This course is designed to provide a comprehensive technical understanding of water mist systems, including detailed instruction on the Fike DuraQuench Pro and the Fike Micromist systems. Through a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on training, students will gain both the theoretical foundation and practical experience necessary to properly install, inspect, test, and maintain these systems.

Historical Development of Water Mist Technology
Although water mist systems are often viewed as modern technology, their origins date back to the 1880s. Early applications involved firefighters using backpack-style sprayers to combat small forest fires. These early systems demonstrated the effectiveness of finely divided water in controlling flame spread. However, it was not until nearly 100 years later that water mist technology began evolving into engineered fixed fire suppression systems.

A significant turning point occurred in the late 1980s following the adoption of the Montreal Protocol, which phased out ozone-depleting substances, including Halon. As the fire protection industry sought environmentally responsible alternatives to gaseous suppression agents, water mist emerged as a viable and highly effective solution.

Recognizing the need for standardized guidance, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) established a technical committee on water mist systems in 1993. This effort led to the publication of NFPA 750 in 1996, formally defining design, installation, testing, and maintenance requirements. Since then, water mist systems have become increasingly prevalent across a wide range of occupancies and hazard classifications.

How Water Mist Systems Work
Water mist fire protection systems discharge water through specially engineered nozzles at varying pressures—classified as high pressure (500 psi or greater), intermediate pressure (175 to 500 psi), and low pressure (175 psi or less). The nozzles atomize water into droplets typically less than 1,000 microns in diameter. These fine droplets behave very differently from the larger droplets produced by traditional sprinkler systems.
Water mist suppresses fire through three primary mechanisms:

1. Cooling – The small droplets absorb heat rapidly due to their high surface-area-to-volume ratio. As they convert to steam, they remove significant thermal energy from the fire environment.
2. Oxygen Displacement – The expansion of water into steam locally reduces oxygen concentration at the flame front, disrupting combustion.
3. Radiant Heat Attenuation – The mist cloud absorbs and scatters radiant heat, limiting fire spread to adjacent fuels.

Because these mechanisms act simultaneously, water mist systems can control or extinguish fires using substantially less water than conventional sprinklers. This reduction in water demand translates directly into minimized collateral damage and reduced post-fire cleanup.

Applications and Advantages
Water mist systems are widely used in environments where traditional sprinkler systems may present limitations. Common applications include:

- Data centers and IT (information technology) rooms
- Telecommunications facilities
- Museums and libraries
- Marine machinery spaces
- Turbine and generator enclosures
- Industrial process equipment
- Commercial kitchens
- Rail vehicles and certain transportation compartments

In many of these settings, water supply constraints, limited space for large-diameter piping, or the need to protect sensitive equipment make water mist particularly advantageous. Additionally, because these systems use potable water rather than chemical agents, they offer an environmentally sustainable alternative aligned with evolving regulatory and environmental priorities.

The Fike DuraQuench Pro System
The Fike DuraQuench Pro is a pumped, intermediate-pressure water mist system operating at approximately 175 psi. Unlike high-pressure

systems that may operate at 1,000 to 2,000 psi, DuraQuench Pro achieves effective mist generation at lower pressures, simplifying pump design and reducing mechanical complexity.

The system connects directly to a building's potable water supply or dedicated reservoir. A skid-mounted centrifugal pump pressurizes the water and distributes it through a piping network to strategically placed nozzles. Depending on the application, the system may utilize:

- Closed-head nozzles, integrated with wet-pipe or pre-action configurations for data centers and light hazard occupancies.
- Open nozzles in a deluge configuration, suitable for industrial hazards, such as turbine enclosures and machinery spaces.

In data centers, DuraQuench Pro provides targeted suppression while minimizing water exposure to critical servers and infrastructure. In industrial environments, it offers a water-based alternative to carbon dioxide systems, eliminating concerns related to life safety and asphyxiation risks associated with total flooding CO_2 discharges.

Light-hazard occupancies, including offices, hospitals, schools, apartments, and libraries, can also benefit from system adaptability, especially where reduced water demand is desirable.

The Fike Micromist System

In contrast, the Fike Micromist system is a self-contained, intermediate-pressure water mist solution operating at approximately 320 psi. Unlike pump-driven systems, Micromist utilizes stored nitrogen to pressurize an onboard water supply.

The system consists of a water storage tank—typically 70 or 112 gallons—and one or more nitrogen cylinders. During standby conditions, the water tank remains unpressurized. Upon activation of the detection system protecting the hazard, solenoids simultaneously open both the nitrogen and water valves. Nitrogen pressure is regulated to 320 psi before entering the water tank, where it forces stored water into the distribution piping network.

The nozzles atomize the water into fine droplets through controlled impingement design, creating a uniform mist within the protected enclosure. The system cycles discharge—40 seconds on and 40 seconds off—continuously until the tank is depleted or the releasing control panel is reset.

Because Micromist is self-contained and does not rely on a continuous external water supply, it is well-suited for remote locations, marine applications, and hazards where immediate discharge reliability is critical.

Course Structure and Learning Outcomes

Two sections of Course 7003 will be offered at ITP in 2026, allowing up to 24 students to participate in this specialized training. The program will provide:

- In-depth study of water mist science and suppression dynamics
- Design criteria and hydraulic considerations
- Installation methods and piping material requirements
- System acceptance testing and commissioning procedures
- Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance (ITM) requirement in accordance with NFPA 25
- Detailed code review and compliance with NFPA 750

Students will leave the course with a clear understanding of system selection criteria, hazard evaluation, and performance-based design considerations. Emphasis will be placed on practical application, ensuring participants can confidently apply water mist technology in real-world scenarios.

Preparing for the Future of Fire Protection

As regulatory frameworks evolve and environmental considerations continue to influence system selection, water mist technology is positioned to play an increasingly significant role in special hazard protection. By combining foundational theory, code compliance, and hands-on system exposure, the 7003 Water Mist for Fire Protection course ensures participants are prepared to meet the growing demand for efficient, environmentally responsible, and high-performance fire suppression solutions.

EPA Regulation Changes: The Expanded Use of R290

Submitted by Robert Vilches, UA Training Specialist

The HVAC industry is barely a year into the transition from R410A to A2L equipment, yet the next wave of regulatory changes is already appearing on the horizon. While the phase-down of R410A is scheduled to continue through 2034, the EPA is already moving forward with SNAP 27, a new proposal that will further reshape the refrigeration and air conditioning sectors..

What is SNAP 27?
SNAP 27 is the latest set of proposed revisions regarding acceptable refrigerants and their specific use conditions. Most notably, it proposes a significant expansion of R290 (propane).

Currently, R290 use is highly restricted:

- **Limited Applications**: It is only permitted in small, self-contained units, such as dehumidifiers, under-counter refrigerators, and window units.
- **Strict Charge Limits**: Current limits are capped at 500 grams (17.64 oz), depending on the equipment type.

The Proposal: SNAP 27 seeks to bring R290 into the residential and light-commercial air conditioning sectors, with proposed charge limits increasing significantly to approximately six pounds.

Overcoming Technical Hurdles
For R290 to enter the residential market, safety standards must be updated:

- **UL Standards**: Current UL 60335-2-40 standards do not allow R290 in U.S. residential equipment.
- **Ongoing Revisions**: Working groups are currently updating these standards to allow for broader U.S. adoption.
- **Timeline:** Currently being installed in select applications and jurisdictions. Experts estimate that an expanded offering of R290 residential and light-commercial equipment will happen as early as 2030.

Preparing the Workforce (ITP Course 6059)
Just as training for A2L refrigerants began four years before equipment arrived, the industry is preparing for Hydrocarbon (HC) refrigerants well in advance.

- **New Training Rollout**: Beginning in 2026, updated training materials for HC refrigerants will be introduced.
- **Curriculum Updates**: This course will cover both A2L and HC training manuals and will finish with two exams, each 50 questions.
- **Future Integration:** Once R290 equipment becomes available in the U.S. market, physical equipment will be integrated into the the training classes.

We will continue to monitor the final rulings of SNAP 27 to ensure the workforce is prepared for this next transition.

Do You Struggle with Consistent Discipline in Your Training Center?

Submitted by Trent Mauk, UA Training Specialist

It was the 2013 Instructor Training Program, and I was sitting in my first training director/coordinator class with a whole 40 hours of experience under my belt as Local 333's new coordinator. Al Clinedinst, from Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 486, Baltimore, MD, was the instructor, and he spoke about their SEPS program and how it added continuity to the discipline structure of their training center. SEPS stands for Self-Elimination Point System, and, as Al put it, it's black-and-white. You don't kick them out—they self-eliminate—plain and simple. This caught my attention because I felt that we were missing accountability in our program. Upon completing the ITP, I went back home and found that several locals were using a similar system, so I sat down and started drafting ours together. We used a little from Local 486, a dash from Local 50, Toledo, OH, a sprinkle from Local 83, Wheeling, WV, and stirred in some of our own language to create our local SEPS packet.

Our SEPS point system consists of 26 possible violations, each weighted by severity. The following are just a few examples:

1. Theft or vandalism – 10 to 15 points
2. Termination by an employer – 10 points
3. Reporting to work under the influence – 10 points
4. Sleeping in class – 5 points
5. Tardiness (per offense) – 1 point
6. Failure to bring required materials – 1 point

The point system is maintained throughout the Apprenticeship Agreement. Any apprentice who accumulates 15 points in a single school year, or a total of 30 points at any point during the apprenticeship, will be self-eliminated from the program. Once points are assigned, they cannot be removed or erased. Whenever an apprentice receives points, they are asked to come into my office to sign a SEPS receipt sheet. This process provides an opportunity to discuss the situation and ensure there are no underlying issues.

After running the program for several years, we found it only affected roughly 30 percent of our apprentices, and most went five years without a point. The ones who it does affect, SEPS will get them out fairly quickly before too much time is invested in them. This amounted to approximately five percent of our students hitting the points limit and being suspended.

The JATC suspends individuals for six months and reinstates them only if they commit to earning no additional points while in the program. This approach emphasizes accountability and fairness. If a participant earns more points, the policy requires sending a certified letter requiring their attendance at a hearing. The JATC Committee then carefully evaluates whether the SEPS policy has been violated. If a violation is confirmed, the apprentice faces removal from the program, with the option to appeal within 30 days. This structured process ensures discipline while also providing a fair chance for review, maintaining integrity and continuity within the program.

Being new, I inherited some well-established apprentice classes, and the SEPS system caught them off guard. I explained to them that this would add value and accountability to the program, making them more valued as apprentices. I also sold them on the fact that, as journeypersons, they would know what type of apprentices they were getting out in the field. Behind the scenes, I wanted to add pride and honor to the program, and I have always felt that this can only come from going through something hard but not impossible. Do you remember that first roller coaster you went on and survived, being sure to tell your friends how many times you almost died? Or how about getting your first weld cert after practicing forever? Or how hard you worked to save up enough money to buy your first car? What pride would we have if any one of these things had just been given to you?

Our training programs are the same. I always felt that we not only wanted good members, but we wanted **good** members. Consistent discipline and accountability will help facilitate the incubation chamber for the brotherhood and sisterhood that is created in our training centers.

It has added more value for our graduating apprentices, and as we raise our expectations, it adds more value to the program and to the product that we turn out. If you are interested in learning more about the program, you can find an example of it on the UAALLY Instructor Shared Resource System under the Director/Coordinator tab in the OLR.

Another American Icon Joins the List of Companies Helping UA Training Centers

Submitted by Trent Mauk, UA Training Specialist

At the training centers, we are always trying to make our training funds go a little farther, and when I heard Training Director Tony Rottman from Plumbers Local 130 in Chicago talk about another tool company interested in helping our UA training departments, I couldn't dial the phone fast enough. At the conclusion of the call, I was invited to tour the forging facility of Klein Tools right in Chicago—and it was nothing short of inspiring.

Founded in 1857, Klein Tools has been relentlessly committed to American manufacturing for more than a century and a half. Walking through the facility, you can feel that legacy in every step and stage of the process. From raw steel to finished product, the craftsmanship, precision, and pride behind each tool are unmistakable. This is not just manufacturing—you can tell its tradition, innovation, and workmanship forged together.

While I have always thought of the brand as synonymous with electrical tools, the company is actively expanding its current tool offerings. Klein is positioning itself not only for electricians but also for plumbers, pipefitters, service technicians, and welders. Their growing lineup now includes plumbing and pipefitting equipment, as well as welding hoods—all developed through hands-on research and development conducted at UA training facilities in the Chicago area. This direct collaboration ensures the tools are built around jobsite demands and our training needs.

Even more impressive is Klein's commitment to supporting the apprentices of the UA. The Klein team is actively seeking partnerships with UA training centers to invest in workforce development through initiatives, such as:

- Sponsoring apprenticeship contests and graduation ceremonies
- Supporting lab buildouts and tool endowments
- Providing apprentice tool kits tailored to specific trade needs

In addition, Klein offers:

- Educational discounts for schools and students
- Made-to-Order (M2O) student tool kits customized to match curriculum requirements
- Outstanding Graduate Awards to recognize to p- performing students
- Guest teaching sessions focused on safety and best practices
- Free training videos and educational signage for training labs

It's inspiring to witness an American icon continuing to invest in our trades. Recognizing they're not the only option, they are eager for the chance to demonstrate to every UA training center what they've been missing. With partners such as Klein Tools helping lead the way, the future of UA training—and the skilled trades as a whole—looks more promising than ever.

For those interested in exploring the full Klein Tools product lineup, the complete catalog is available at www.kleintools.com.

If you are interested in discussing how Klein Tools can support your training program, you can reach out to Peter McGargill at pmcgargill@kleintools.com.

Site Specific Welder Training, Evaluation, and Performance Program

Submitted by Justin Forni, UA Training Specialist

Brothers and sisters of the UA, I hope this newsletter finds you well and good as we all head into springtime. With many new projects kicking off for 2026, this is a great time to share a tool with you. As we all know, UA membership is the largest it's ever been, and the amount of workload has reached a new high. It is crucial to use every resource we can to supply the best-trained workforce in the industry. The program I am presenting is another tool we are utilizing on many different projects and at many local unions to ensure our success. This is a simple overview of the program, which includes different forms and documents that are used to produce the desired trained welders in agreement with the tripartite alliance.

Purpose:
Enhance overall project welding capabilities and performance through a tripartite alliance, which includes the owner, contractor, and the UA.

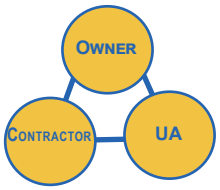
Scope:
Work together with the project owner and contractors to identify specific job requirements, processes, and procedures related to welding during the pre-planning stages to provide the best opportunity for a successful project outcome.

Background:
The development of qualified and competent welders is a process that requires intensive training accompanied by extensive jobsite welding experience. The skills required to consistently produce the quality of welds required in the heavy industrial, petrochemical, and power generation sectors can take years to master. It is mutually understood that the implementation of a system that matches welders' skill sets with actual jobsite processes and procedures will provide the best project outcome for end-users and contractors, as well as provide a sustainable path for the development of current and future welders.

Items of pre-planning review:
Overall scope and duration of the project:

- Work schedule
- Number of welders needed and proposed hiring schedule
- Welders available locally
- Weld processes and procedures to be used
- Material(s) to be welded
- Processes to be used for testing
- Additional training that may be required
- Training resources available locally

The goal of this program is to:



- Identify and properly plan for all project welding tasks normally performed by the UA.
- Determine training and evaluation resources available through the local union.
- Enlist the resources of the UA Education and Training Department to enhance local training as needed.

When all three organizations come to the table to implement this program, we see the best possible outcome to put our members to work. Accountability and commitment from all parties are what we need to successfully build jobs together. If you would like to talk about this and receive more information, please contact me anytime.

I wish you all a blessed spring season, and thank you for all you do to represent UA training!

UA Continuing Education in a Changing Environment

Submitted by Bruce Dantley, UA Training Specialist

In the December 2018 issue of the *UA Journal*, in the President's Report, UA General President Mark McManus stated, "Our journeymen and women are working hard locally to upgrade their already superior skill sets. They are focused on all kinds of skills, from upgrading licenses to backflow, new welding procedures to OSHA, CAD, BIM, and beyond. They have always understood that a UA career involves lifelong learning, and they realize that this is true now more than ever. Existing and evolving information technology and an ever-changing jobsite make education a critical aspect to keep you a valuable employee of our contractors. We want to always be the first choice of our contractors and to stay head-and-shoulders above the non-union competition. Because of the commitment of our members to continuing education, I know that this is happening every day across North America."

2026 Welding Document Update Notification

Submitted by Bob Derby, UA Training Specialist

Mega projects seem to be a common topic of discussion amongst the building trades. Although these large-profile projects have caught the spotlight, we must continue to maintain the more typical worksites and ongoing projects that keep signatory contractors and UA members busy. As the types of projects continue to broaden, we are challenged with ensuring that UA members have the training and the credentials to back the high skill levels expected by the end-users, who count on the UA for a sophisticated labor force. The ITF continues to monitor the work in our industry. Many projects require certifications to validate the skillsets of the craftspeople performing the work. Valid, up-to-date credentials are in high demand and are required to be accurately maintained. As job specifications and related construction codes evolve, we must ensure that our credentials reflect current requirements.

All UA welder testing document packages have recently been reviewed for accuracy and updated to comply with industry standards and code changes, including qualified ranges for base materials. The material qualification change is a result of changes made in the ASME (American Society of Mechanical Engineers) codes, which our welder qualification tests are based on. Other minor and non-essential changes have been made to include more precise guidance for the acceptance criteria regarding the maximum overall cover pass width.

As a reminder, Authorized Testing Representatives (ATRs), Training Coordinators, Training Directors, and Office Professionals who are responsible for generating UA welder testing documents for use in accordance with the UA Welder Certification Program (WCP) must access the documents only through the internal UA database. This requirement is in place to ensure that the most current documents are being used when testing UA welders and is necessary for maintaining secure and accurate documents. Downloading and saving the welder testing documents or accessing them through another source is not authorized. Secure and accurate documents are essential for maintaining the integrity of the highly respected UA Welder Certification Program. Course 8000, "Administration of an Authorized United Association Weld Test Facility," covers this requirement in detail, among other essential information. All current ATRs who have not successfully completed Course 8000 since January 2022 must do so by **October 31, 2027**, to maintain active status for administering UA welder testing sessions. ATRs that do not complete the training by the deadline will be removed from the dropdown menu on the UA welder portal and will not be authorized to administer welder testing until they successfully complete Course 8000. All future ATR candidates must successfully complete Course 8000 to become an Authorized Testing Representative. Current Certified Welding Inspector credentials are also required. Course 8000 is offered regionally, and multiple sessions will be available during the ITP.

It has come to our attention that some software vendors providing services to local union training centers have uploaded UA WCP welder testing document packages without permission. The addition of the UA WCP testing documents to the vendor software programs is unauthorized. Recent situations have identified outdated documents being used for testing welders. When this occurs, we are not operating within the requirements of the UA WCP Quality System Manual. Adhering to a standardized program that will continue to be trusted by contractors and end-users is essential to successful advancement. To address this type of non-compliance, the software vendors have been, or are being, notified to remove the UA testing documents from their systems as they are identified.

Current welder testing document packages will have a revision date of "12.2025" on the lower, right-hand corner of the page. If an earlier revision date appears on any UA welder testing document packages that are accessed through the UA internal database, please notify the UA Certifications Department.

We all share the responsibility to maintain the highest level of integrity and performance that UA members have demonstrated on jobsites for decades. Signatory contractor partners and end-users have an elevated expectation of UA labor. The elevated expectations are validated through rigorous testing and certifications that set UA

members apart from the non-union labor force. We endeavor to be the best and collectively bargain for the best compensation package based on our efficient productivity and safety. These attributes are gained through training and experience, but are validated by certifications.

Being efficient not only applies to field labor. Adhering to testing processes and procedures, including verification of proper documentation, is essential to professional performance. As UA members, we are piping professionals who raise the bar for our industry. Construction codes and standards provide the established minimum requirements. Proper documentation validates that the UA meets and exceeds those requirements and the job specifications that we are required to comply with on projects.

Together, we share responsibilities to ensure UA piping professionals remain the best choice to build and maintain North America's infrastructure. Let's all do our part to meet the elevated expectations that make the UA labor force the preferred choice.

Active Shooter Warning Alarmed: Run, Hide, Fight, or Barricade in Place

Submitted by Bruce Dantley, UA Training Specialist

Recent violent attacks on schools, churches, and places of business have drawn great attention to the importance of active shooter training and refresher seminars at your local training centers.

Training Directors have a duty of loyalty to provide a safe working environment for their staff and students. Our new reality has unfortunately emphasized the importance of survivor tactics when gunfire is heard or a violent attack is imminent. The sound of gunfire should immediately activate your training to **run**, **hide**, **fight**, or **barricade in place**.

JATC Trustees and Training Directors/Coordinators, please consult your in-house legal counsel on the necessity and obligation of your training centers to provide active shooter training for workplace safety, and the potential litigation and lawsuits if you do not offer the training.

Supporting Veteran Apprentices: The Value of GI Bill Benefits in UA Training Programs

Submitted by Mike Hazard, UA Training Specialist and VIP Program Manager, and Nicole Jeup, VIP Program Administrator

UA apprenticeships provide a strong career path. For veterans, the GI Bill adds a significant financial advantage—often worth tens of thousands of dollars over the course of training. It is more than just an earned benefit, it's a recruitment tool, a retention strategy, and a bridge for veterans entering the trades.

As more veterans transition into building trades, the GI Bill has become one of the most powerful—but underutilized—tools to support them. Many locals are already doing strong work in this area. At the same time, there's an opportunity across the UA to continue building consistency and awareness so that every veteran apprentice has the support they need to succeed.

Understanding GI Bill Benefits in Apprenticeships

Unlike traditional college use, the GI Bill works differently in apprenticeship programs. Instead of paying tuition, the benefit provides:

- A monthly housing allowance (MHA) based on an E-5 with dependents in the program's ZIP code
- Up to $1,000 per year for books and supplies (Post 9/11 GI Bill)
- Up to 36 months of benefits
- Benefits decrease 20% as apprentices receive regular wage increases & progress through the apprenticeship program

GI Bill Payments Over the Course of Apprenticeship

One of the most important (and misunderstood) aspects is that GI Bill payments decrease over time:

- Months 1–6: 100% of housing allowance
- Months 7–12: 80%
- Months 13–18: 60%
- Months 19–24: 40%
- After 2 years: 20% until completion

How Locals Can Better Support Apprentices Utilizing the GI Bill

Getting started with certifying enrollments for apprenticeship programs involves working directly with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to have your training center and program approved for GI Bill use. Here's a clear path to follow:

1. **Get your program approved by the State Approving Agency (SAA)**
   Each state has an SAA that reviews and approves apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs for VA benefits. You'll need to submit program details (standards, wages, progression, and related instruction). Once approved, your program becomes eligible for GI Bill funding.

2. **Apply for access to VA certification systems**
   Designate a staff member to act as the school certifying official (SCO) by completing VA Form 22-8794. The SCO will need to complete required training through the VA. Upon completion a training certificate will be issued. The training certificate and completed VA Form 22-8794 must be submitted to the VA's Education File upload portal. The VA will send confirmation once these forms are processed and further instructions to gain access to Enrollment Manager. This allows your training center to submit and manage veteran enrollment certifications.

3. **Establish internal certification processes**
   Create a consistent workflow for onboarding veteran apprentices—collect required documents (e.g., Certificate of Eligibility), track hours and wage progression, and submit enrollment certifications promptly. Regular, accurate reporting ensures apprentices receive their monthly housing allowance without delays.

4. **Use VA tools and maintain compliance**
   Leverage resources like the GI Bill Comparison Tool to verify program details and support apprentices. Stay aligned with VA reporting requirements and maintain records for audits to keep your program in good standing.

5. **Communicate with apprentices and partners**
   Educate apprentices on how their benefits work and what to expect. Maintain open communication with your State Approving Agency and VA representatives to resolve issues quickly and keep your program running smoothly.

VA GI Bill Resources
Education Call Center:

The toll-free number for the Education Call Center is **1-888-442-4551**. The Call Center is in Muskogee, OK, and Education Case Managers are available 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (CST), Monday through Friday. The system's automated functions can provide information about benefits, applications, etc., and are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Individual Veterans can access their own record to obtain date of last benefit payment, check amounts, etc.

When to contact your Education Representative (ELR):

- Updating Certifying Officials; VA Form 22-8794
- Questions about reporting student enrollment and related changes
- 85/15 reporting matters
- Clarification of approval issues, WEAMS 22-1998 reports

When to contact the SCO Hotline: (get the number from your ELR or through Chatbot Billie in Enrollment Manager)

- Status of Tuition and Fee payments or Yellow Ribbon payments
- Explanation of school debt creation for individual students
- Hardship cases
- Technical assistance for Enrollment Manager (EM)

When to contact your SAA:

- Program revisions; new/suspended/cancelled programs
- Updated catalogs and related publications
- School address updates; including branch and extension locations
- Changes in accreditation status
- Change of ownership

When to Contact the VBA Support Team at Support@vbatraining.org:

- Questions about the functionality of the SCO Online Training portal

VA Education and Training Resources and Support

VA offers a wide range of tools, documents, and contact points to help you succeed as a School Certifying Official (SCO).

Scan the QR code to access the most important links and support systems, so you always know where to turn for answers or assistance. This page brings together the most important links and support systems, so you always know where to turn for answers or assistance.

Whether you're certifying your first student or navigating a complex compliance question, help is always available. Bookmark your tools, stay in touch with your SAA and ELR, and check the Resources for Schools page regularly to stay current.

You've got this—and VA is here to help.

AI Proof Careers and More Members

Submitted by Laura Ceja, Special Representative of Training and Outreach

About a month ago, a friend of mine sent me a video of Chinese robots performing an elaborate kung fu martial arts routine on a stage. At first, I thought the video was fake—AI (Artificial Intelligence) generated—but after checking it out on different links, news stories, and video posts, it became clear the video was real. As amazing as the robots were, a little more research revealed the true story. The robots were programmed to do what they did—they could not do anything else. I found other videos of the same robots trying to walk around inside a home. They bumped into things, broke things, and could not walk from one side of the house to the other. The bottom line is that they could not think of or solve real-world problems. AI and robots can do a lot of jobs, but they still can't do the job of a tradesworker. A career in the trades is AI-proof. This is the message I have been delivering at various events across the country over the last four months.

At the Indiana Future Farmers of America (FFA) National Convention in October of last year, there were more than 73,000 attendees. I had the opportunity to discuss trade jobs at the UA. It seemed as if all 73,000 attendees visited our booth. The message was simple: The United Association has career and job opportunities that cannot be outsourced or done by AI. Many of the visitors to our booth are looking for careers with longevity and careers where you can take pride in your work. With the help of Indiana Training Directors, apprentices, and ITF Training Specialists, we got the message out. Visitors to our booth also had the opportunity to test their skills and enter our Virtual Welder Competition. It is worth noting that the winner was a young lady, which brings me to the second part of the message I have been delivering at these events: careers at the UA are here for everyone, including women.

At both the Association for Career and Technical Education in Nashville and the American Association of Community College Workforce Development Institute in New Orleans. I was able to reach out to technical educators, community college educators and counselors, all looking to place their students in high paying careers. And once again, AI was the main topic of discussion. Counselors and educators recognize that the traditional post college job market is changing. Many of the jobs that college graduates could obtain with a two- or four-year degree are disappearing, but not jobs in the trades. The community college representatives are especially interested in trade careers at the UA. They are looking to partner with the UA, swapping students between their schools and our apprenticeship program, sending their graduates into our apprenticeship program and taking our apprentices into their AA programs, a win-win for both organizations, our members and their students.

Along with their interest in AI proof careers, meeting a woman tradesworker was eye-opening for many of the attendees. Most of the educators I talked to had never met a woman plumber, had never seen one on television, movies or the internet. On a related note, my husband who works part time as a substitute teacher at a local school, happened to be working on World Plumbing Day. He asked his students if they had ever seen or met a woman plumber, anywhere, they all said, "no". He might as well have asked them if they had ever seen a unicorn. As I have met many of my husband's students, they were shocked to find out that I was a plumber. We must all make a concerted effort to get the word out to women to let them know that careers in the trades at the UA are here for them.

On some non-recruitment news, I attended the IAPMO Standards Council in December to finalize the 2027 UPC and UMC Codes. The IAPMO Standards Council is the plumbing industry's version of the Supreme Court. Many hot topics were discussed that affect all our members. As always, my purpose on this council is to ensure that the plumbing code continues to adopt the highest industry standards—industry standards that

align perfectly with the high standards of the UA, its training programs, and its workforce. These standards and the UA's ability to provide the skilled workers needed to apply the codes are the reasons the UA has no equal in the trades.

Finally, Build Stronger Together is stronger than ever. Content updates have been uploaded to the UAOLR, which include course assessments. The updates can now be downloaded from the UAOLR. There are new evening Build Stronger Together online course offerings in 2026. A total of 137 UA members from 63 locals have already taken the Build Stronger Together Course and are currently training other UA members on professionalism in the workplace. I highly encourage training directors to sign up for this course. This train-the-trainer course provides them with the tools to teach others how to create a professional work environment at their local. A professional work environment will help us attract members who might not have considered a career in the trades. A professional work environment will also help us retain members. It is heartbreaking to lose a member, not because they can't do the job, but because we cannot provide a professional work environment where members can thrive. A professional work environment should not be the exception; it should be the rule.

In closing, we need to let everyone know that careers in the trades are here to stay! Careers in the trades are here for everyone! One in every 1,000 people in the U.S. and Canada is a UA member! Let's double that to one in 500 by reaching out to women. We cannot let the world continue to think of women tradesworkers as unicorns. We have to make sure we create a professional work environment where everyone is welcome. I will continue to go out and share the amazing career opportunities available to women at the UA. I hope each of you tries to recruit at least one new member this year—family, friends, strangers, bellhops, Uber drivers—whoever. The rewards are priceless. Over the holidays, I got messages and phone calls from the parents of new members I recruited in 2025, thanking me, and it felt **great!** I want all of you to go out and recruit as many members as you can. Give someone the gift of an amazing career at the UA

Advancements of Orbital Welding within the Medical Gas Industry

Submitted by Joe Fernandez, Jr., UA Training Specialist

The medical gas industry—responsible for delivering oxygen, nitrous oxide, medical air, and other critical gases—demands the highest standards of cleanliness, reliability, and leak integrity. Traditionally, copper piping systems have been joined using brazing techniques, but recent advancements in orbital welding technology are transforming how these systems are fabricated and maintained. This shift is driven by innovations in automation, materials science, and high precision welding equipment, enabling copper to be welded with a level of consistency and quality previously unattainable.

Back in 2012, NFPA 99 Health Care Facilities Code introduced this process which is currently in the 2024 edition which can be found.

Chapter 5 Gas and Vacuum Systems

5.1.10.5.1 Gas Tungsten Arc Welding (GTAW) for Copper and Stainless Tube.

5.1.10.5.1.1 *Welded joints for medical gas and medical-surgical vacuum systems shall be permitted to be made using a gas tungsten arc welding (GTAW) autogenous orbital procedure.*

Until recently, this process hasn't been greatly utilized on copper applications due to lack of technology for orbital welding copper just didn't meet the standards. That was then, this is now.

A major advancement in recent years is the development of **specialized orbital welding systems capable of handling copper**. New equipment has overcome long-standing thermal challenges through innovations such as:

- Advanced cooling systems to manage high heat loads
- High-amperage closed-arc weld heads
- Improved shielding gas delivery and containment

These innovations now allow **fusion-based, filler-free welding of copper**, producing strong, homogeneous joints with exceptional repeatability.

This represents a significant departure from brazing, which relies on filler metals and open flames—both potential sources of contamination in medical environments.

Eliminating open flames and filler materials reduces fire risk and operator exposure, a key consideration in hospital construction and retrofits.

Recently I had the opportunity to visit one of our industry partners Critical Systems Inc. (CSI) based in Boise, ID, along with Assistant Training Director of Education and Training Mike Galfano and Training Specialist Robert Derby.

The founder of CSI, Ted Jones and his team has been developing a system in which orbital welding, specifically for copper over the past several years has been successfully accomplished.

During our visit, they explained and demonstrated the process which can weld copper pipe from 3/8" to 1-1/2."

The advancement of orbital welding for copper marks a pivotal shift in the medical gas industry. By enabling **cleaner, stronger, and more reliable joints**, this technology is setting new standards for safety and performance in healthcare infrastructure. As automation, digital integration, and material science continue to evolve, orbital welding is poised to become the **preferred method for copper pipe joining**, gradually replacing traditional brazing in critical medical gas applications.

Codes and Standards Updates

Submitted by Jason Shank, UA Administrator of Codes and Standards

This year is already moving fast for myself, and I assume for all of you. The codes and standards worlds are also moving quickly to update current codes and standards and creation of new ones that, in time will be a part of industry. Below is some of the activities UA Codes and Standards has been and continues to be a part of for our industry and how these activities can assist your Training Centers.

- Held the UA's Annual Codes and Standards Meetings and Conference in early February 2026. Attendance for this year was around 100 UA members, representing more than 70 UA Locals and JATC's. During these meetings UA Committees covering Fire Protection, Fuel Gas, Mechanical Systems, Medical Gas Systems and Plumbing Systems met to discuss this years plans,review last year's activities, established processes to reach our goals and networked with each other for assistance in their normal positions back home.

- UA Codes and Standards held two meetings this year, along with ICC – PMG Council. The purposes of these meetings are to build our relationship with ICC by getting your Training Centers the resources you may need to train your members. This could be a contact person to ask a code related question or interpretation, how to get a 40% discount on code books and training materials or access to ICC-PMG power points for use at your training center. We will be offering a few more of these events throughout 2026 both remotely and in person. If you are interested in hosting a training event like this, please let me know.

- We are finishing up work on the IAPMO, ICC and NFPA Codes/ Standards for their 2027 editions. As these become completed, we not only were able to effect outcomes in these but will be able to assist Locals and Training Centers with these changes as they come into your areas.

- As we look to the development of the 2030 editions of the codes and standards (IAPMO, ICC, NFPA, ASSE to name a few) over the next 3 years we have already had UA members apply and continue to apply to these important positions. If you or a member of your Local Union wishes to get involved to assist on these missions and bring this information and connections back to your Local, please use this link to fill out a short survey and I will get in contact with you or them.
  Joining the UA CDC – Fill out form

- It will be a busy year for all things NFPA—which is normal—as the UA is once again attending the NFPA Technical Committee meeting in June to voice and vote its stance on certain NFPA Codes and Standards that can affect our collective work in fire protection, medical and fuel gas systems, and the safety of the members and users of these systems. In April 2026, I will be providing more information for these meetings. I hope you are able to attend.

- We continue are long standing relationship with ASSE International and IAPMO in the areas of Professional Qualifications Standards,Certifications and education. UA Members are currently working on Standards/Education/ Certifications for areas we all know such as Backflow (ASSE 5000), Medical Gas Installers (ASSE 6000) and Water based Fire Protection Systems (ASSE 15000) but are also working on standards for Installing and repairing Fuel Gas System and installing cured in place piping (CIPP). If you, or someone at your Local/JATC is interested in bringing their voice and experiences to develop these and others please email me at jshank@uanet.org.

These are just few updates and reports on the work many of our UA Brothers and Sisters are working on for all of us. Every week there appears more opportunities for us to help shape our industry and then provide this to our Local Unions and Training Centers. If you have ideas nationally or locally, I encourage you to drop note to me and one never knows where it can take us.

Important Notice

2026 ITP Course Registration (tentative)

Opens: Thursday April 30th

Closes: Wednesday July 1st

FREE!

Rowan University Project Management Webinar

Planning & Scheduling

Risk & Safety

Cost Control

Webinar Date

Monday, April 6, 2026 at 4 p.m.

Wednesday, April 8, 2026 at 4 p.m.

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 at 4 p.m.

Thursday, April 16, 2026 at 4 p.m.

Register Today
(Click or Scan below)

Register Here

Rowan University

ATTENTION

2026 ITP Schedule

Please Note That The Classes Will Be Full Days.

Wednesday, August 5th

Registration Day, Faculty Meeting, New Student Meeting

Thursday, August 6th

Classes Begin

20-hour

8:00 AM - 12:05 PM

1:00 PM - 5:05 PM

40-hour

8:00 AM - 5:05 PM

Friday, August 7th

20-hour

8:00 AM - 12:05 PM

1:00 PM - 5:05 PM

40-hour

8:00 AM – 5:05 PM

Saturday, August 8th

20-hour

8:00 AM - 12:05 PM

1:00 PM - 5:05 PM

40-hour

8:00 AM – 5:05 PM

Sunday, August 9th

20-hour

6:30 AM - 10:35 AM

11:30 AM - 3:35 PM

40-hour

6:30 AM – 3:35 PM

Graduation 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Monday, August 10th

Last Day of Classes

20-hour

6:30 AM - 10:35 AM

11:30 AM - 3:35 PM

40-hour

6:30 AM – 3:35 PM

Education and Training Department Staff

Administrative Assistant
Suzanne Ellis

Certification/Registration Department
Carrie King
Certifications Manager/Registrar
Kristyn Ivey
Certifications
Tyler Masengale
Assistant Registrar
Angie Sterling
Certifications
Kiva Straser
Recruitment/Registration
Agatha Wolyn
Curriculum Coordinator

ITF Comptroller
Matthew Robertson

ITF Finance Department
Helen Holmboe
Kaitlin Soderstrom
Tracy Webster

Instructional Technology Coordinator
Lauren Friedman

Meeting & Events Planner
Cindy Williams

VIP Program
Nicole Jeup
Program Administrator
Tammie Parezo
Administrative Assistant

IPTJTC Bookstore
Dianne Lash Manager
Peggy Jarrett
Jay Meadows
David Parmenter