PG&E - Marketing & Communications | Partnership with Community College in Vegetation Management

Following the devastating wildfires in 2018, PG&E began working with the local community colleges to help bring on a stable workforce. We had a mobile workforce coming from out of state. What we find is when you live and operate in the communities that we protect, we get a better product. So we really spend time working and focused on bringing in a larger workforce from the local communities, and through the community college, we've really been able to do that.

PG&E approached Butte College to develop training for utility arborists and pre-inspectors, and help turn that workforce need into an actionable training program. Employers help us identify gaps, and we listen and take action and adjust the training to what's happening out in the field.

The utility industry needs qualified, job-ready utility arborists, line clearance workers, and pre-inspectors. This partnership helps address that need by bringing PG&E's industry experience and safety expertise into training aligned with the knowledge, skills, and behaviors these careers require.

All of our trainers here at Butte College use a job instruction method, which is a standardized, repeatable way to train workers. Every instructor follows the same important steps, the key points and the reasons for those key points. Students receive consistent training, and that consistency is what prepares them to perform the work safely and with confidence.

What attracted me to vegetation management is that I get to work outdoors, I get to work with trees, and I also get to keep the community and the power lines safe. This program has given me the confidence and skills to take the next step.

What I find valuable is that the trainees are building skills through repeated practice using PSEMS concepts from PG&E. For example, during chainsaw training, they learned how to complete a full inspection and continually practice proper handling and cutting techniques. The training operation mirrors the work environment. While giving trainees time to practice, receive coaching, and build safe work habits, PG&E is investing in the futures of a lot of people through this program, and that program goes on to affect a lot of people's lives.

One way PG&E contributes to that safety expertise is through PSEMS, our Safety Excellence Management System. PSEMS helps us identify hazards, manage risk, use the right safeguards, and keep learning. By incorporating those concepts into its training, California Community Colleges are helping students build safe work practices from day one and enter the workforce better prepared to recognize hazards and make safe decisions.

It's just been amazing. It's given me not only just a job, but a career. And being persistent and networking yourself is the way to get in, making sure you put your best foot forward.

Every day, the safety brief engages trainees. They perform proper PPE and equipment inspections before beginning training operations. It's oral and hands-on, allowing us to assess that every trainee understands the work and can perform it safely.

I think physical, hands-on training is what really gets individuals to grasp what they're learning. This program does a great job with that. We do classroom sessions. We also get the ability to go out and showcase what we're learning. It's an awesome opportunity.

When students enter the workforce with a shared understanding of utility expectations, it strengthens the entire safety pipeline. Future coworkers are better prepared to learn, contribute, and work safely from the beginning.

Building this pathway takes all of us, education, industry, and public investment. Together, PG&E, California Community Colleges, and utility partners expand access to training, which prepares students for real field expectations and connects them to safe, meaningful utility careers. And I want to personally thank PG&E for being such a great and valuable partner to this program.