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# Celebrating 50 Years of Educational Excellence

## On track with Electricity

A-Tech has offered an Electricity program since the classroom lights were first switched on 50 years ago. Originally an Industrial Electricity offering, the program was gradually modified to meet to include training for entry-level electrical workers in the residential and commercial fields. It remains focused on those careers in 2019.

"It really hasn't changed a lot except for the materials and equipment," says Henry Notter, the program's instructor. "It's all gotten better."

A union electrician and second-generation electrical business owner, Notter has 40 years of experience as an electrician and tailors his instruction to real-world practices and challenges. Further, he knows the state of the industry — a large percentage of the nation's veteran electricians are moving toward retirement, and the field is wide open for today's high school students who chose Electricity. The fact that Notter, like many of the other A-Tech instructors, is a veteran of the discipline they teach, helps him tailor the instruction to the real-world projects that local contractors are called upon to complete.

"I know what contractors want, and I can give the students the tools, if they want to learn. I can pass them on," Notter says.

The program's junior year focuses on residential and light commercial wiring. Notter says students learn the basics of electricity and how to do professional-quality basic electrical work. Each student is assigned to a work area in a lab built upon 4-by-4 framing similar to what they find in typical residential

pace in this individualized learning environment, and Notter monitors that progress to make sure that their workmanship does more than make the electrons flow where they ought—they complete the work according to Electrical Code standards, which are integrated into every new topic.

During the senior year, students learn industrial electricity. Notter says the instruction is part of the program because Ashtabula County's strong industrial and manufacturing bases needs entry-level workers with a solid foundation in electrical practice and safety.

Advisory committee members who work in area manufacturing plants provide insights to the program so Notter can tailor training to the employers' needs. For example, he includes low-voltage wiring in the curriculum so they can work on security, data cabling and fire alarm installations. George Ferl, who works for Cristal, advises Notter from the industrial perspective, another wide-open field for graduates.

"Plant maintenance is a very good job. We have a lot of plants in Ashtabula County who need electricians," Notter says. "It's not a bad job. It's a good way to provide for your family."

Program graduates who want to pursue a career in electricity should plan on a five-year post-secondary apprenticeship. Notter, who has taught apprenticeship classes, says the classroom work can be pursued through either a union or non-union training program. In either track, the apprentice electrician will need 8,000 hours of work experience and additional classroom training before he or she can earn the top wages.

"A journeyman will make \$33 an hour or more, and the plants pay \$26 to \$33 an hour, or more. It gets to the point where you can make a very decent wage," he says.

The career tree for electricity is broad and has many hidden branches. One of the fields that students may not think about when coming into the program is that of public utility system that delivers the power. Senior Ryan Johnson of Jefferson has entered the Cleveland Electric Illuminating (CEI) Company's lineman training program, which will pay his tuition at Tri-C. He credits the A-Tech training for getting him accepted into the CEI's program.

"It has taught me a lot," he says of the A-Tech program.



The Electricity program was one of the original course offerings in 1969. Since then, it has evolved to include wiring for smart home innovations. Here Sebastian Zerucha works on wiring.

construction. They learn to read blueprints, run wire and make connections to switches, outlets and distribution panels within their personal lab area. Each student progresses at his or her own

"It's very educational," adds Electricity student Brent Carroll, also of Jefferson. "I came in here not knowing anything, and now I feel that I have a good knowledge of electricity. I really enjoy the science behind it."

## Connect with A-Tech!

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