

APPRENTICESHIP

Operating a Training Facility During COVID-19

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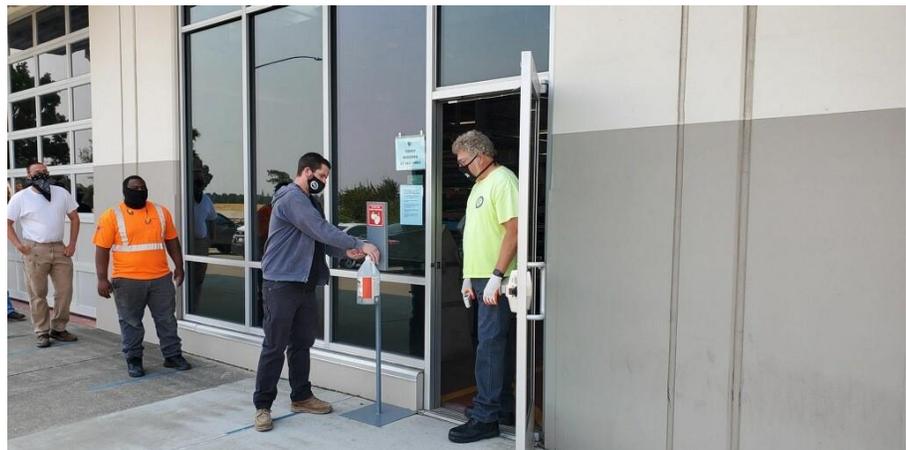
Training sheet metal apprentices always has its challenges, but operating a sheet metal apprenticeship training facility during this time of COVID-19 is completely uncharted territory. How do apprentices social distance during hands-on training? How do the training facilities adjust their daily operations to handle the COVID-19 requirements? How do we keep everyone in the facilities safe?

Sheet Metal Workers' Local 104 & Bay Area Industry Training Fund faces these challenges and many more, while continuing to train 1,000 apprentices in four training facilities located around the Bay Area.

Training program administrators, training coordinators and instructors along with the fund's trustees, all worked together to develop a safe and efficient process to continue effective training. The two main driving factors when evaluating the new training process were making sure the apprentices and staff stayed safe within the facilities, and that apprentices were able to continue training and keep on schedule with their advancements.

A comprehensive training facility COVID-19 operational plan was developed with information from the CDC, OSHA and the Sheet Metal Occupational Health Institute Trust that spells out the responsibilities of the facility, staff and apprentices, along with operational

procedures. The operational plan is revised as new information on COVID-19 safety is released and staff develops better procedures. . COVID-19 awareness training was provided to staff, to solidify their understanding of safety requirements.



Apprentices line up 6 feet apart at their appointed classroom door and sanitize their hands before entering.

Along with developing a plan and conducting staff training, HVAC systems in all facilities were evaluated for increased air circulation within the classrooms. The amount of outside air brought into the facilities was increased and higher efficiency filters were installed prior to resuming classes.

Class size has been restricted to no more than 10 students, with larger classes being split into two groups. While one group is attending class in the facility, the other half are participating in distant learning. These groups rotate between being in facility and distant learning throughout their week of training. All apprentices were provided iPads to allow them to attend class electronically.

When apprentices arrive at a training facility they are required to answer a series of health questions and have their temperature checked. All answers and temperature must meet the requirements spelled out in the operational plan. Each class has their own outside entrance identified and their own direct path to the classroom. Screening takes place at a specific door identified for that class and apprentices are not allowed to vary from these identified areas of the building. Facemasks and social distancing are required at all times while on the facility grounds, inside the building and outside. Gloves are supplied in all hands-on shop related training and apprentices are required to wipe down any equipment they are operating after each use.

These represent only some of the major adjustments the training program has made to be able to continue training. It is a challenging time but Sheet Metal Workers' Local 104 & Bay Area Industry Training Fund continues to rise to that challenge. Adjusting, evaluating and adapting is the key to successfully continue apprentice training.