

SPRINKLER FITTERS U.A. LOCAL 483 TRAINING CENTER

Training in the City by the Bay

Sprinklerfitters Local 483's new training center, located in Hayward, California, is a place where people want to come to learn. You can tell by the reaction on their faces and how they describe the facility.

"Anytime I bring somebody into our training center, I seem to get the same reaction: 'Whoa, this is great! I had no idea you guys had this type of building,'" said Stan Smith, business manager at Local 483.

"We are very fortunate here at Local 483," he added. "Our membership supported the move to a bigger facility wholeheartedly."

There was a lot of time, effort and money put into finding this building and getting it ready for operation by the training center and the union. But Smith says that it has all been worth it. He notes that the training program has really flourished. There are now about 200 apprentices working in the local, and the journeyman training has really stepped up.

"Our fitters come here now and say how much they enjoy coming back for classes," said Smith.

Brandon Day, a journeyman member of Local 483, noted that the training offered by the local provides the members with information they need to properly implement new state codes.

"The facility has provided me with the tools necessary to perform my job to the highest standards," said Day, "and the knowledgeable staff, which is mostly comprised of working fellow sprinklerfitters, has always been available to help with questions which may come up while working in the field."

Day believes that training is the future of his profession and added, "The availability of ongoing training at the facility has enabled me to provide my customers with the best and most current training in the industry."

The members of Local 483 and their signatory contractors provide fire protection needs for both residential and commercial clients. These skilled craftspeople perform new installations, retrofits, maintenance, inspection, testing and service in settings that range from the high-rise buildings of San Francisco to the high-tech facilities of Silicon Valley to the wineries of Napa Valley.

Local 483 Training Director Jim Bollier noted, "The fire protection industry is growing and changing so fast that we need our people to stay up to date, and they are doing a great job."

In addition to the five-year apprenticeship program, which is accredited by both the UA and the state of California, Local 483 offers continuing education opportunities that include journeyman training and certification, as well as an associate's degree program. Sprinklerfitter continuing education classes include arc welding and CPR/first aid. The spring 2007 classes included a detailed review of the changes to California Title 19 put forth by the California State Fire Marshal, as well as a class that reviewed the changes to the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) 13 2002 Edition.

The fire sprinkler inspection classes open to authorities having jurisdiction (AHJ) are also very well attended, and the

local has been getting a great response from the local fire departments about these classes.

Lorin Neyer, compliance officer with the Office of Statewide Health, Planning and Development, said, "This class contains many examples of new technology and materials that kept even the most seasoned inspector interested. The biggest benefit of all from an AHJ's standpoint is that all 45-plus of our staff learned the same thing at the same time."

She also noted that having the AHJs on the same page with one another is a start, but also being on the same page with those who actually install the systems is priceless.

"That's a huge benefit to our office and the clients we serve in the construction industry," added Neyer, who says she will continue to recommend this class to anyone involved in inspecting fire sprinklers, no matter who they work for.

Captain Thomas Harvey, a 25-year firefighter with the San Francisco Fire Department Bureau of Fire Prevention, noted that all firefighters promoted to the rank of fire inspector attend the classes at the Local 483 training facility, but the training has also benefited numerous other fire agencies throughout Northern California.

"No other facility allows the fire service to have the opportunity to see and operate a variety of automatic sprinkler system installations, including pre-action systems," said Harvey.

Harvey had praise for Business Manager Smith and Training Director Bollier, as well as for Business Agents John Crowley and Tony Santana for their work with the city and county of San Francisco. He sees the partnering of Sprinklerfitters UA Local 483 with the San Francisco Fire Department as helping to assure more reliable, higher quality automatic sprinkler installations.

"The higher quality installation and inspection procedures benefit the citizens, the industry and the fire department," said Harvey.

At Local 483, the officers and the members understand how important it is to have trained and highly skilled craftspeople installing, inspecting, testing and maintaining fire protection systems to keep the citizens of Northern California safe. Training has always been an important part of Local 483. Its commitment to providing the best trained and most qualified sprinklerfitters in North American is even included in the local's mission statement. And now, with its state-of-the-art training facility, Local 483 is better equipped than ever to live up to that mission.



Apprenticeship training class and instructors

Apprenticeship piping class



Instructors Max Brown and Keith Jones

Weld lab



Pump and underground lab



AutoCAD class in computer lab



Valve lab and fire sprinkler test cell