

ANOTHER STEM INTERVIEW!

Meet Cathy Deering

PUD Journeyman Lineman

We interviewed Cathy to find out about her job at the PUD. But she was too shy to have her photo taken.

What sparked you towards a STEM career field?

I was raising two boys, and there was more money in this career than in traditional jobs. My dad was in construction so I kind of took after him, working on cars and stuff. I took a class for mechanics, then got a job at Puget Power and that's how I got into the line trade.

What type of training do you have?

I had to first go through an apprenticeship program, which I did at PSE. It involved three years of on-the-job training and classes every other Saturday, which involved a lot of tests. While doing the apprenticeship program, you get paid for the work on the job but not the classes. The classes were mainly math/algebra, trigonometry, stuff you didn't think that you'd ever have to use, but you do actually. Luckily, I was good at math in school. That was always one of my favorite subjects.

What STEM skills are important in your job?

Math for sure and some engineering. When we did math in school growing up, I always wondered when I was ever going to use it. When you get out in the field, there are certain times when you need to calculate things. For example, at times I need to figure out voltage and what the voltages are in a transformer bank. I use math in setting a pole and figuring how deep to set it. Sometimes I have to figure out which line fuse to use for the right transformer. One tool that I use a lot is a simple ruler. We also use maps and machines that help us find an outage, and those machines also take math skills to use. One machine is a volt finder. I actually don't use math every day for my job now because what I do now has a lot of repetition, so I have a lot of the calculations in my head.

Thanks to the engineers out there, my job has gotten easier because of new technology. I used to have to tie the wire onto the insulator with sticks. Now the insulators have screws so you can just screw it on with a hot stick (a hot stick is an insulated tool). We also used to have old wood-handled presses to make the connections of wires, and now we have battery-operated presses that make things much easier.

Why is your career unique?

Not everybody wants to do my job and not everyone's qualified to do it. It is competitive to get into this field, and it takes training to be certified. Once you become trained, it is your

ticket and you can go anywhere and work because there is always going to be a demand for this job. This job also has good variety. It is nice to not always be stuck in one spot day after day. You always get to work in a difference place, which is fun and doesn't get boring. I'm on-call every day, which is definitely different than most jobs. They can call me 24 hours, 7 days a week so I'm always ready for when there is a big outage.

What do you like about your job?

It is a fun job that I really enjoy. I like to work outside every day, which I figured out after working in grocery stores and in a hospital. You get used to the rain. When I was younger, I loved the storms. Every time the wind would blow, I'd get so excited. It is really rewarding to get people's power on when it has been out for a while.

Advice for students who want to go into a similar career?

- 👉 Keep brushed up on your math skills, algebra especially.
- 👉 Stay in shape, lift weights and don't smoke so you are physically fit for the job.
- 👉 You can't be afraid of heights. During my training at climbing school, we had to climb an 80-foot pole.
- 👉 You need to be willing to work a lot of hours and be on-call.
- 👉 This is definitely a good field to get into as there is room for advancement and it pays well. You can start as a flagger and work your way up from an apprentice to a journeyman and then to a foreman who is in charge of the crew.
- 👉 You have to be able to work as a team. Each crew has to work together on the projects that they do. 🍷

Facts about the PUD apprenticeship programs:

The PUD offers seven indentured apprenticeship programs designed to graduate entry-level employees to journey-level status. Each program has specific prerequisite requirements and combines academic studies and on-the-job training. The PUD pays all the costs incurred in the programs, and the employee earns an excellent hourly wage during the apprenticeship.

The Lineman Apprentice program is a 3.5-year course that is designed to teach the knowledge and skills necessary to construct and maintain the PUD's electrical systems. The course includes both classroom and supervised on-the-job training. Applicants must be in excellent physical condition and possess the ability to work in inclement weather.

To learn more about apprenticeship opportunities in Washington state, including more details about the PUD program, visit www.lni.wa.gov/tradeslicensing/apprenticeship.