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Electricians are at home with power

The demand for electricians strong in many industries

By **BOB WEINSTEIN**
Employment Correspondent

For the past 50 years, most parents have considered vocational training a last educational resort.

A degree from a four-year college or university was preferable because it opened most career doors. They may be underestimating the value of a vocational education.

It's not just a four-year college education that opens career doors. It's any educational experience leading to a secure and fulfilling career.

This includes a raft of skilled crafts jobs that require vocational training, such as electrician, plumber and brick/tile mason.

These are careers that require a combination of both classroom and on-the-job training, and they are taught either in short-term training programs or at union-sponsored apprenticeship programs.

The demand for practically all skilled crafts jobs proves the need for these programs. It won't be long before the shortage of electricians puts a serious crimp on construction activity throughout the United States.

By 2014, there will be demand for more than 734,000 electrical workers — a figure 78,000 beyond the number

currently employed in the field.

Edwin D. Hill, president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), recently summed up the problem.

"The task ahead is not only to recruit and train more electricians to meet the needs of a growing industry, but to make provisions to replace current electricians who will retire," he said.

It's projected that 550,000 new construction jobs will be created through 2008, and 240,000 workers will leave the industry every year due to retirement and other reasons.

The electrician shortage is not just an American dilemma.

It's also a worldwide problem. There are an estimated 37,000 job openings in the UK alone.

The shortage of electricians will affect not only homeowners who experience sudden power outages, but the multibillion-dollar residential and commercial building industries as well as manufacturing.

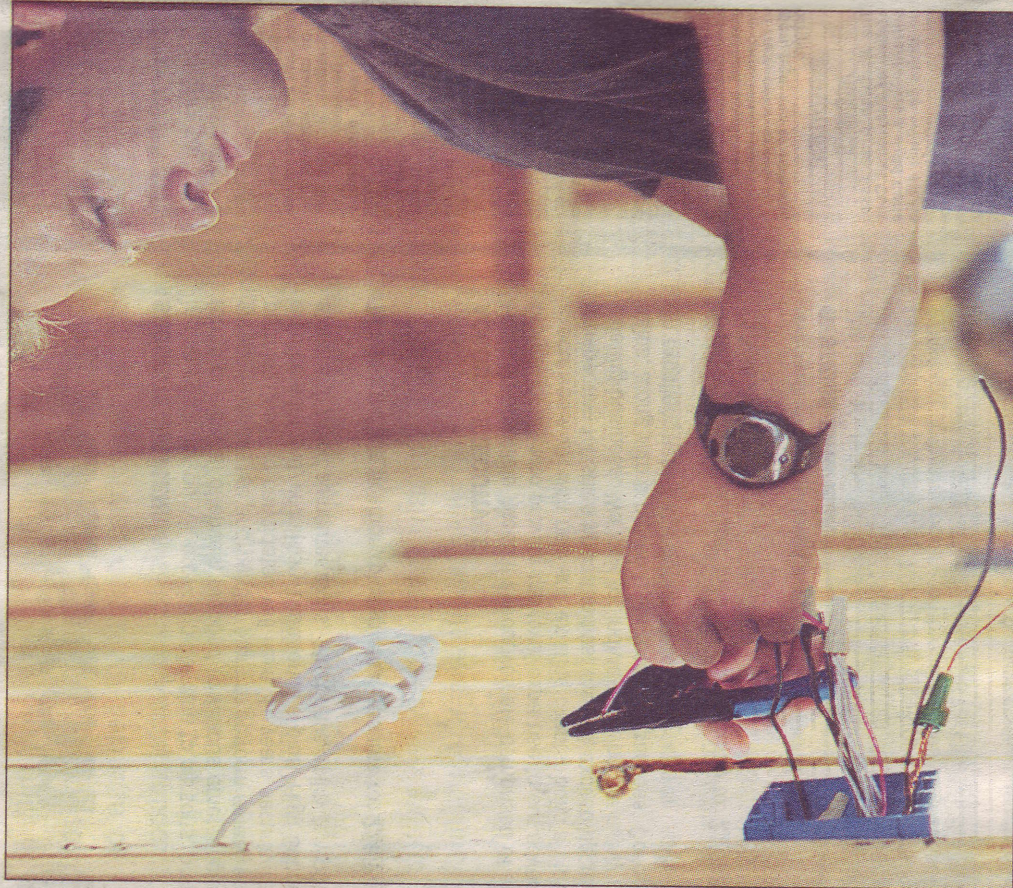
Daniel Gibbs, vice president of Skilled Craftsmen of Texas, places electricians, as well as other skilled workers in primarily industrial settings.

He sees ongoing demand for maintenance electricians, those responsible for installing and maintaining large machinery.

"I've been working in the industrial side for 13 years. The availability of tradesmen has declined, and it's become more difficult to fill positions. As long as we have manufacturing or construction there's going to be a demand," he said.

These statistics mean plentiful opportunities for you, your children and your grandchildren.

If you're thinking about a career with a future, you wouldn't be wasting your time pursuing one that has to do with electricity — installing electrical circuitry, troubleshooting problems, or designing, engineering and project-



WIRED FOR SUCCESS: Electricians will see continued demand for their skills in construction, as well as in industrial settings and the repair industry.

managing electrical power plants.

And these will be jobs with competitive pay. Many also offer the opportunity to work overtime, at even higher hourly wages.

"There's good pay," Gibbs said. "If you find a good job and stay at it, you

can make a good living."

There are two obvious paths leading to a career as an electrician. The first is a vocational or community college that can prepare you for an entry-level job. The second is a union-sponsored apprenticeship.