

# BC3 to launch “intensive” utility worker program

## National training agency in oil, gas industries to add hands-on instruction

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(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College and the Gas Technology Institute have joined to offer for the first time a month-long program introducing prospective job seekers to field skills needed to perform in the natural gas industry.

BC3’s Utility Worker/Field Skills Training Certificate program will blend classroom instruction, hands-on experiences and field work, including heavy equipment operator training, excavation safety, pipeline installation and maintenance, and underground pipeline locating.

“It’s a very intensive program,” said Maria Chvala, BC3’s coordinator of industrial safety training. “Students are going to get a lot of training in this short amount of time.”



Maria Chvala, Coordinator of Industrial Safety Training at BC3.

The program, to be held in BC3’s Public Safety Training Facility, is scheduled from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays March 13 through April 7.

GTI is “a nationwide training agency specifically in the oil and gas industries,” Chvala said. “They have their own program that they put together.” Instructors with GTI, headquartered in Des Plaines, Ill., will teach 63 classroom hours that will include hands-on training in the pipe installation and maintenance training curriculum, Chvala said.

BC3 instructors will teach 93 hours that include an introduction to natural gas, OSHA safety and health standards, fire safety, excavation safety training for competent person, safe driving and traffic control flagging.

Additional lessons will cover excavation near a natural gas pipeline, vacuum excavation, leak surveys and horizontal directional drilling.

## Pennsylvania No. 2 in the U.S.

Pennsylvania is the nation’s second-largest producer of natural gas, according to the state Department of Labor and Industry. The commonwealth’s natural gas production increased more

than 2,400 percent from 2005 to 2014. It also sits above the largest unconventional and second-largest overall natural gas field in the world, according to the state Department of Community and Economic Development.

More than 19,600 workers were directly employed in natural gas development in Pennsylvania as of June, the state Department of Labor and Industry's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in December.

Royal Dutch Shell announced in June it would build a chemical plant in Monaca, Beaver County, where the company would make plastics from gas extracted in Pennsylvania. Projections for employment are up to 6,000 during peak construction and 600 full-time positions in the future, according to DCED.

When out-of-state companies began to place natural gas platforms in Pennsylvania at the outset of the Marcellus shale economic boom, "They were having to bring in their own employees," Chvala said. "This was all new to us. A lot of people weren't aware of this industry or knew how to work in it, and so they started bringing all their employees up here."

BC3 has worked over the years to develop programs to train individuals for employment in the natural gas and oil industry to allow companies to hire locally. It offers noncredit natural-gas industry roustabout training and an Energy Production Technology Certificate. BC3 also offers a 24-credit Energy Technology Workplace Certificate.

The Utility Worker/Field Skills Training Certificate is BC3's newest noncredit program. Students will also attend a job-shadowing field trip at a local natural gas utility company or natural gas facility as part of their training experience.

## A head start

Employability skills – such as how to create a resume “and how to word this type of training onto a resume to help present yourself better,” Chvala said – will also be included in the Utility Worker/Field Skills Training Certificate program.

“They get a little bit of extra in there,” she said.

Those who attend the program may have a head start on others seeking entry-level utility worker positions, Chvala said.

“They are going to get the working knowledge, the hands-on experience,” she said. “They are going to be given a lot of lectures on the equipment, the instruments that they use out there in the field.”

The cost of the 156-hour Utility Worker/Field Skills Training Certificate is \$4,500. Funding may be available for some students through CareerLink and Career T.R.A.C.K. in Butler, Chvala said.

Requirements for the program are \$75, which includes the successful completion of drug screening, a certified background check and vocational screening assessment. Students must also have a high school diploma or equivalency.

“I’d like to think people are thinking ahead,” Chvala said. “Doing this now, so that when the next boom starts they won’t have to backpedal and catch up and try to get training when it is really needed.”

For more information, contact Chvala at (724) 287-8711 Ext. 8355 or visit [bc3.edu/programs-classes/certificates/utility-worker.html](http://bc3.edu/programs-classes/certificates/utility-worker.html).