Message from James Pavesic
Director of Education and Training

First off, I hope that you and your families are healthy and safe! In these very trying times, I’m proud to say the Education and Training Department has not skipped a beat. Our department has functioned—with everyone working remotely—as if we were operating under normal circumstances. Through all of this, the flexibility, ingenuity, and dedication of local union training centers has been apparent.

The UA ITF offices will open June 1 with a phased-in, staggered schedule. All others will continue to operate remotely. Our weekly conference calls have been very productive, and I feel like our department has never been busier. One thing that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted is our department’s ability to shift quickly and refocus on alternative training platforms. We have always been ready. The pandemic forced the issue with some of the training centers, and because of that, we may have turned a corner for select training center’s willingness to embrace new technology.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the UA Education and Training Department is to equip United Association locals with educational resources for developing the skills of their apprentices and journeypersons. By thus facilitating the training needs of the membership, we maximize their employability and prepare them for changes in the industry. We are committed to making training opportunities available across North America, allowing members to acquire new skills and remain competitive in the industry regardless of geography. In this way, we are determined to meet the needs of the piping industry and enhance employment opportunities for our members, while remaining fiscally responsible to the beneficiaries of the fund.
When push came to shove, the resources we utilize worked. Online Learning Resources, Blackboard, and WebBook usage is being reported up by 30 percent. There are some other impressive statistics that Lauren and Laura have compiled in their respective articles regarding usage. We have successfully run several webinar classes on ICRA, Labor History, and Leadership, and many online exams are now available. The VIP classes are being held remotely, and our VIP hands-on training will resume as soon as the bases are open.

As training centers had to adapt to remote training platforms, it has given our instructors and directors/coordinators an indication of what works remotely and what doesn’t. As we move forward, if we are confronted with a continuing pandemic or other challenges that affect traditional classroom training, we will be better prepared because of what we have learned through this process.

As you know, the regional classes have been cancelled through the end of August. We will consider the rest of the 2020 schedule at a future date. We are working to move many of the regional classes online. Due to the ITP and International Apprentice Contest being cancelled for this year, we are looking to move some of those classes online as well.

All ITF grants are continuing to be processed, and all other ITF business is continuing as usual. Certification expirations have been extended, and certifications continue to be processed. Phil Martin expands on this issue in his article. The UA Bookstore is fully operational.

I want to thank my staff for all their hard work, and the pivotal moves they have had to make during these difficult times. I would also like to thank all of the doctors, nurses, first responders, and essential workers for all that they do each and every day to keep our countries safe and strong! Please continue to use commonsense when it comes to your safety and the safety of your families.

The UA ITF has been implementing the Blackboard Online Learning Management system for years, but in today’s “socially distant” learning environment, it has become invaluable. The Blackboard Online Learning Management system is a huge storehouse of instructional resources, knowledge, records retention, and classroom management. Because of this, the UA ITF has received an overwhelming interest in Blackboard, its use, and how to enroll in courses for both beginner and intermediate uses. These courses are taught by experienced UA instructors who have a tremendous amount of experience in transferring highly technical UA courses to an online digital format. To sign up for these courses, training directors may log into UANet.org and click the following link for 2020 Regional Training Registration: Regional Training. If you have any questions, please contact Cathy Merkel at cathym@uanet.org.

The UA ITF also has alternatives to structured Blackboard courses. The UA ITF created an Instructor Resource Course in Blackboard that houses training specifically geared toward how UA instructors can create and manage their online Blackboard courses. This training includes guidance and helpful videos on how to import ExamView to Blackboard, create announcements, add course modules, change passwords, update gradebooks, adaptive release of content, creation of tests, and uploading content. It’s a self-paced, learn-as-you-go resource. Recorded video webinars can also be viewed on an as-needed basis.
To self-enroll, log into Blackboard, and click the following link: UA ITF Resource Site. By enrolling in the UA ITF Instructor Resource Course, you will be able to self-navigate Blackboard resources, get tips, and actively participate in discussions about everything related to Blackboard. This resource is updated daily with videos, guides, and discussion board postings to support your efforts in Blackboard implementation and instruction for your apprentices.

If you have any questions regarding Blackboard, please contact Resource Site moderators directly: Laura Ceja lceja@uanet.org 310-403-3484 or Lauren Friedman lfriedman@uanet.org 301-356-2869.

For more information on UA ITF instructional support, watch this video: https://bit.ly/uablackboardvideo.

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**UA Strong: Training and Technology**

**Submitted by Lauren Friedman, Instructional Technology Coordinator**

The UA is ahead of much of the higher education world in the training tools we use. Most colleges are still struggling to make virtual reality relevant to their mission. We are giving away full kits to teach apprentices how to safely navigate trenching. Many large school systems simply don’t have the infrastructure to support all of their students being online at the same time. The UA has more apprentices than their students, and we can handle the load.

When schools started closing in early March, the ITF knew we were in for an unprecedented uptick in our services. After years of telling our instructors about the things we had to offer, they were about to be forced into a situation where those tools would be essential. If people couldn’t meet in person, they were going to have to find something new to use.

For those who don’t know, the two major tools we offer are the Online Learning Resources (UAOLR), which is a system for distributing content to instructors and study material to students, and Blackboard, which is a system that allows instructors to give tests and assignments, acting as more of an online classroom. The UA has provided both without charge to locals for over five years.

In the entire calendar year of 2019, we registered 3,935 new users to the UAOLR. Since March 16, when the UA office closed and the staff moved to remote working, there have been 4,590 new registrants. Of these, 4,501 were students. For the first time, OLR registration is over 24,000 total users and over 18,000 students. We have added a few new resources in this time, including a new UAwebBook for Related Mathematics.

Instructors can register for the OLR by going to uaolr.org and clicking “Request an Account.” Students must be registered by their training coordinator or training center.

Over on Blackboard, in the same time period, we have created 2,421 classes and 12,000 users. In all of 2019, we created 2,485 courses and 5,869 users.

Perhaps the biggest piece of news is that, even with the uptick in users, we have experienced no system crashes, no security breaches, and no major delays in service—something many public schools and universities can’t say. The UA accomplished this, in part, through the work of our strong partners at Washtenaw Community College and American Technical Publishers, who maintain the back ends of these systems, as well as the staff at the ITF, who have worked tirelessly to support our members.

As states begin to open up again, and we start looking to the future, it is safe to say that these resources may be utilized a little less, but they will remain as available as before. And the UA will remain ready, providing the resources our instructors need to teach and that our apprentices need to learn.

And, if another disaster comes along, we can rest securely in the knowledge that the UA stands ready.

For more information about the UAOLR, Blackboard, or other resources the ITF offers, please see the e-Resource Training Guide.
Behind the Virtual Curtain

Submitted by Richard Benkowski, UA Training Specialist

The stage manager signals the actors to begin. The production is now “live.” Introductions of the players are made. The first speaker welcomes the audience that cannot be seen. In kind, the audience members chat with an invisible orator. When the introduction is complete, the first instructor describes the lesson plan in a room by himself. Wait! Invisible audience? What does “chat” mean? By himself? George Jetson call your office!

What was just described was an online classroom experience. To be sure, the curriculum presented was unchanged from what would be presented in a classroom. The instructor and students did not have the opportunity to be in the same room. Every participant in the course watched and listened on a device. Learning has become normalized for anyone to learn anything anywhere on any device.

How did we get here? The COVID-19 pandemic that has gripped the country has presented many unique challenges in all sectors of the piping industry. Hundreds of thousands of buildings have been and are now unoccupied. Stagnant or standing water can cause conditions that increase the risk for the growth and spread of Legionella and other biofilm-associated bacteria. Pipefitters, plumbers, and HVACR service technicians in every state are pivotal in the sequence of operations for reopening an idled structure. The trucks, tools, technicians, and training of these craftsmen are critical to the public health of all Americans released to return to their interrupted workplaces.

When did we get here? In early April, the UA General Office released a labor/management initiative called “Incident Response Strategic Plan” to accelerate the mobilization of UA members onto healthcare projects. A total of eight webinars were outlined. The plan focused on infection control as it related to protection of the patients, clinicians, and UA craftsmen and women. Additionally, training was released to prepare the anticipated reopening of many buildings vacated during the shutdown.

As the crisis unfolded, many—if not all—of the UA local training centers temporarily closed their doors to their students. The ITF staff received numerous calls for help in getting members dispatched safely to jobsites. A lot of requests arrived asking for infection control training in order to protect UA craftsmen and women.

Deployment. Not one of the programs delivered in the webinars were created in response to the pandemic. The first four offerings dealt with Infection Control Risk Assessment (ICRA). ICRA had been taught in UA locals since 2007. In 2016, the ITF formalized the program and added ASSE certification for the instructors, contractors, and members. The second phase of the rollout centered around the UA Water Quality Program, which launched in September 2018.

It was now time to adapt course materials to a digital platform for deployment. When a class is planned for local instruction, the audience is known. Furthermore, all attendees reside in the jurisdiction, walk into a classroom where the instructor and UA manuals are waiting. The local office professionals arrange the exam and schedule a proctor on the appropriate test date. Webinars offered by the UA Department of Education and Training for use by signatory contractors and rank-and-file journey workers require the coordination of resources from the ITF, MCAA, ASSE, and the International Pipe Trades Joint Training Committee. All of the aforementioned resources conferenced to create and execute a strategic plan.

Acknowledgments.

MARKETING: Cathy Merkel, UA Registrar, sent invitations to all of the UA local training directors with instructions to enroll candidates through UANet. Likewise, Pete Chaney, MCAA Director of Safety and Health, advertised the opportunity on the MCAA website.

ENROLLMENT: As described above, two audiences were pursued for the webinars. Each group enrolled differently. UA members gained direct access through UANet. Lauren Friedman, ITF Instructional Technology Coordinator, created an electronic form for MCAA personnel to complete on the website. Cathy Merkel and Tyler Masengale organized rosters for distribution to other departments or partners.
REGISTRATION: All attendees were required to obtain course materials. For select webinars, employees of signatory contractors were eligible for a credential exam at the completion of the webinar. Once participants completed the enrollment procedure, the information was passed onto the UA Bookstore. Dianne Lash, Peggy Jarrett, and Darlene Lee processed the fees for materials and exams. The Bookstore staff also sorted out the candidates’ exam eligibility during this procedure. Finally, David Parmenter and James Meadow shipped course materials as needed to individual attendees.

ENGAGEMENT: Kurt Steenhoek, UA International Representative for Plumbing and Co-Chairman of ASSE 12000, coordinated efforts with industry partners and stakeholders to assure a uniform message. Kurt also connected the resources of ASSE as required to meet the needs of each of the webinars.

TECHNOLOGY: Lauren Friedman was the production manager and event director for the virtual workspace as each webinar was delivered. In preparation, Lauren coached the instructors, held virtual rehearsals, and recorded the sessions. Login information was sent to the attendees prior to each webinar. After each webinar, Lauren posted links to the recording and access to the presentation materials.

DELIVERY: Special thanks for the time and effort from the ITP master instructors: Dennis Molnar, LU 172; John Sullivan, LU 1; Manny Ferrer, LU 638; Chuck Berra, LU 268; and Scott Hamilton, ASSE Senior Director, LU 75. Their contributions in real time satisfied the goals of this very important initiative.

CREDENTIALS: ASSE awarded certificates electronically through the approved training site, in this case, the UA Department of Education and Training. Cathy Merkel and Tyler Masengale emailed the credentials to the individuals who earned them.

The total commitment from all staff, partners, and stakeholders resulted in a very robust response from the candidates. In the first phase, over 500 contractors and members attended the ICRA webinars, with more to be scheduled. Additionally, more than 100 contractor personnel and UA craftsmen and women enrolled in the first webinar of phase two.

George Jetson was known to yell to his wife, “Jane, get me off this crazy thing!” Nothing related here is crazy. It is the COVID-19 world we now live, work, and virtually train in. A lot can be gained from an invisible instructor streaming intellectual 1’s and 0’s to your devices. When the opportunity arises, take a moment to chat with them.

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COVID-19 Restrictions Impact UA VIP Programs Nationwide

Submitted by Micheal Hazard

With the recent celebration to memorialize the veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice to our country, I wanted to take a moment to highlight the need for continuous efforts to support and safeguard veterans, their grieving families, and loved ones who are left behind. Although Memorial Day is celebrated annually, it is important to note than many of our UA veteran brothers and sisters may experience the impact of these losses every single day for the rest of their lives.

Memorial Day can tremendously magnify the anxiety, depression, and hardships related to PTSD that many military veterans struggle with daily. I ask that you, not only keep these American patriots in your thoughts and prayers, but I also encourage you to ask your military veterans, “How are you doing?” Normalizing conversations regarding the mental health of our loved ones and our co-workers, whether they are veterans or not, is imperative now more than ever before. Please remember that you do not have to be a doctor to help. A simple smile or greeting, reassurance that you care and want to help is sometimes all it takes to start a conversation with someone who is struggling with mental health issues.
As each state introduces measures to restrict movement to reduce the number of people infected with COVID-19, more and more of us are making huge changes to our daily routines. The new realities of working from home, temporary unemployment, homeschooling of children, and lack of physical contact with other family members, friends, and colleagues takes time to get used to. Adapting to lifestyle changes such as these and managing the fear of contracting the virus and worrying about people close to us who are particularly vulnerable are challenging for all of us. They can be particularly difficult for people with mental health conditions. Since COVID-19 restrictions were announced, my first concern was the affect these demands will pose for individuals already suffering. Not only our VIPs, but many veterans across the country.

Due to the pandemic, all VIP training was placed on hold as of March 13, 2020. There are 105 VIP students who have been affected by the decisions we have been forced to make during these uncertain times. Our main goal is to ensure everyone continues to be safe and healthy, and that we keep our promise to the VIPs affected by the crisis and provide job placement.

From the very first day of the COVID-19 restrictions, Director of UA Education and Training Jim Pavesic stated that, “The UA will not turn our backs on these VIPs who we have committed to. We will take care of them the best that we can.” The UA VIP team is working very closely with each of the 105 VIP students affected by these changes to ensure that they continue to receive the training they deserve. VIP instructors have been engaging VIP students in online training in an effort to prepare them as best we can for their potential rocky return to civilian life. We will continue to place the current VIPs with our local unions that can commit to direct entry and employment, but we will not commence any future VIP classes until it is safe for our instructors and students to resume hands-on training.

Reopening plans for the UA VIP program have been established based on recommendations from the CDC and the White House for reopening businesses. These reopening plans are based on gating criteria that must be met prior to safely returning to face-to-face training. The UA VIP program is committed to keeping our promise to VIPs as well as implementing additional safety precautions to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 once the programs are authorized to resume hands-on training. Our instructors are all eager to get back in the shop with their Sailors, Marines, Soldiers, and Airman, and we’re getting closer to being able to do that.

Ultimately, I want to thank each and every UA member for their continued support of the UA VIP program. The success of this program is a collective effort that would not exist today without the tremendous support we have received from all of you. The UA VIP program is not only a great benefit to our organization, but it’s also a wonderful, life-changing opportunity for many of our country’s military service members, as well as for their families. It’s one thing to say, “We support our Troops.” The UA has shown, “We support our Troops, and we will continue to do so, even in times of crisis!”

Certification Update

Submitted by Phillip Martin, UA Special Representative

Due to the extenuating circumstances brought about by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the UA General Office will be implementing measures to address the renewal of members’ certifications associated with the various UA Certification Programs. These certifications include welding, rigging, valve, instrumentation, foreman, etc. Until further notice the UA will not suspend or expire any of our members current active certifications. We will continue to keep our locals updated with any matters created by this unprecedented situation, and the steps that the UA community can take to address them. During this difficult time, the UA has implemented telework solutions enabling our staff to assist our members remotely. We continue to be available via phone or email to assist members with their various certification needs. If you have questions regarding UA certifications, please contact Carrie King, Certification Manager, via email at carriek@uanet.org

In addition, the following organizations provided pertinent information on how they are addressing the concerns with the COVID-19 outbreak.

American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME): ASME issued Code Case 2996 to extend the qualification continuity of joining personnel who have experienced an employment interruption due to the COVID-19 outbreak may be extended an additional three months beyond that allowed by QW-322(a), QB-322(a), and QF-322(a) under the following conditions: The qualification was valid at the time of the employment interruption, and the qualification was scheduled to expire during the employment interruption.
American Welding Society (AWS): We asked the manager of the AWS Certification Department a question regarding AWS considering an extension for CWI renewals. The response we received from AWS was: Yes, we will be extending renewals by 60 days. It is advisable to check with AWS as conditions may change in the coming months.

In addition, AWS will allow an extension on the continuity of joining or allied processes qualifications for those who have experienced an employment interruption due to the COVID-19 outbreak for an additional six months under the following conditions: The qualification was valid at the time of the employment interruption, and the qualification was scheduled to expire during the employment interruption. This extension will expire September 30, 2020.

National Inspection Testing and Certification Corporation (NITC): In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on April 16, 2020, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), as referenced in the NFPA99 Healthcare Facilities Code, has issued Code Case 2996, allowing for the extension of continuity. In recognition of the document, Code Case 2996, National ITC Corporation (NITC) will allow an extension to the continuity of all NITC braze qualifications for those who have experienced an employment interruption due to the COVID-19 outbreak for an additional three (3) months, under the following conditions: The braze qualification was valid at the time of the employment interruption, and the qualification was scheduled to expire during the employment interruption. This extension will expire July 16, 2020, and applies only to the braze qualifications of those workers who have experienced employment interruption as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and maintain current braze qualifications through National ITC Corporation. To apply for this extension of continuity, please go to the NITC website at www.nationalitc.com. For more information, please contact Diana Monarrez, NITC Certification Manager, at 877-457-6482 or by email diana@nationalitc.com.

ASSE International: For our ASSE certified personnel, we want to reassure you that you will be able to recertify, even after the expiration date of the certification. We recognize that some adjustments will need to be made to accommodate certified individuals who are at, or nearing, the expiration dates on their certifications. Many are currently unable to attend classes and take exams. During this difficult time, we are extending the expiration date for all certifications expiring between 1/1/2020 and 6/30/2020. The new expiration date is 7/31/2020. ASSE is also giving a six-month grace period for you to complete a recertification class and exam. Learn more about the steps we’re taking for our certified personnel at https://www.asse-plumbing.org/asse/personnel-certification/about.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration: There have been a number of inquiries recently on the OSHA Outreach Training Program changes as they relate to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Please find below the response from OSHA’s Directorate of Training and Education (DTE).

“Outreach trainers who are registered for update courses or those trainers whose authorizations will expire during your OTI Education Center closure will be afforded a 90-day grace period after classes resume to enroll in a new update class. These trainers may continue to conduct 10- and 30-hour Outreach training classes until the end of the 90-day grace period. Those trainers who have not completed the standards course (OSHA 510) within the past seven years will not be required to take the standards course under this scenario.”

“Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, Outreach trainers may request to conduct classes using an alternative training delivery method. As a result, DTE is temporarily waiving the 60 calendar days advance notification requirement for video conferencing. OTI Education Centers will immediately forward these requests to DTE for consideration as required in the Outreach Training Program Requirements. DTE will notify you when the 60-calendar day requirement resumes.”

UA ITP/Regional Courses Online

Submitted by Cathy Merkel, UA Registrar

As you are aware, we have made the difficult decision to cancel this year’s Instructor Training Program due to the current pandemic. As promised, we are offering classes that will assist local union instructors to stay on track by increasing our regional online class offerings. The UA and WCC faculty look forward to working with you. Please note, the other online regional courses remain open for registration as well.
We have added the following training opportunities, UA ITP/Regional Courses Online:

Session One: June 8 – July 17
1002 Planning, Teaching, and Assessing Effective Lessons: Intermediate
1003 Planning, Teaching, and Assessing Effective Lessons: Advanced
1004 Course Planning and Problem Solving
1010 Public Speaking
2008 Labor History and the UA Part One: 1800 to 1920
3001 Introduction to Teaching Online Using Blackboard™ LMS (Accelerated)
3002 Online Teaching Techniques using Blackboard™ (Intermediate Accelerated)
7071 Developing Tests for Fire Protection Codes and Standards (New)
3004 Microsoft PowerPoint® for Instructors
9006 Addressing Barriers to Apprentice Success

Session Two: July 20 – August 28
1002 Planning, Teaching, and Assessing Effective Lessons: Intermediate
1003 Planning, Teaching, and Assessing Effective Lessons: Advanced
1004 Course Planning and Problem Solving
1010 Public Speaking
2009 Labor History and the UA Part Two: 1920 to Present
2101 Financial Literacy for Apprentices
3002 Online Teaching Techniques using Blackboard™ (Intermediate Accelerated)
3004 Microsoft PowerPoint® for Instructors
7071 Developing Tests for Fire Protection Codes and Standards (New)
9006 Addressing Barriers to Apprentice Success
9007 Veterans in Apprenticeship

Additional Regional online courses that are open for registration:
3100 Understanding the BIM/VDC Workflow in Today’s Construction Industry
3025 Revit® MEP
7025 Revit® for Fire Protection I
7026 Revit® for Fire Protection II (only if Regional Training cancelled)
7027 Revit® For Fire Protection III

Course registration is available online at [https://uanet.org](https://uanet.org)
Select the Regional Training Registration tab to begin the five-step registration process.

Step 1. Contact your local union training coordinator in order to register.
Step 2. Click Begin Registration at the bottom of the page. You will then fill in all required fields that are highlighted in red. The following questions will need to be answered:

1. Are you a Veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?
2. Are you currently on active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces?
3. Is this your first year attending Regional Training?

Step 3. Select courses using the Click Here to Add a Class link. A window will open with a list of courses. You can scroll through the list or search by course number, title, date, location, or status (open or closed).

Step 4. Enter any special requests that you may have. If there are none, leave this field blank.

Step 5. Review your information and confirm it is correct. If so, proceed to Register at the bottom of the page. You will be asked to confirm your registration by clicking OK. This will complete the registration process.

Lean Forward

Submitted by Richard Benkowski, UA Training Specialist

Everyone who plans for, instructs, and attends ITP has been disappointed to learn that the 2020 program has been cancelled. Development of new curriculum does, however, continue within the ranks of the UA Department of Education and Training.

Modern behavior is changing, and human experiences are jumping traditional boundaries. According to Steven Spear, Senior Lecturer at MIT Sloan and recognized expert on high-velocity organizations, the most successful organizations are the ones who use the “lean forward” approach.
High performance buildings are now beyond smart. The cognitive evolution of the built world requires accelerated training initiatives to keep and expand our market share. In UA market terms, consistently seek immediate clarification of your contractors and members concerns to discover their future needs.

Root skillsets of UA craftsmen and women remain the irreducible piece and become the point of departure when we lean into the future. Listed below are specific training agendas that require immediate strategic planning.

LEAN INTO: Your Local Market

Which type of projects and contracts are your signatory partners bidding and selling? Compare and contrast these efforts with the comfort level of your rank-and-file workforce. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your training schedule? Have you asked your members for their opinion?

From the business office, the “Service Contractors Ranking of Topics” is offered to the signatory base for both plumbing and mechanical service. The contractor is invited to a conversation with the business manager, agent, or organizer to address needs of the building owners, facility managers, or homeowners served by the contractor. During the conversation, the contractor is asked to prioritize the importance of various themes.

Another set of surveys has been developed to understand the prevailing comfort level of local members. These forms are a hybrid attempt to combine a job task analysis with the need for enhanced training. The survey is not a test, does not “score” the UA member, and is given anonymously by the local training director.

The next step will be for the business manager and the training director to meet to align the data collected in each of the surveys. An attractive outcome to the exercise will be the formatting of training curriculum that provides mutual benefit to the signatory contractor and the UA member.

LEAN INTO: Modern Credentials

With today’s new alternative refrigerants operating at higher pressures, it is essential to ensure a leak-free system by installing properly prepared, quality, sound joints. Designed and intended to serve as a baseline measure of the Brazer’s ability to produce sound joints, the NITC announces a new braze certification for the HVACR industry. The NITC ASME IX R78 Braze Certification will qualify individuals for brazing on 1/8” through 1 1/8” ACR Tubing. NITC’s HVACR Braze is qualified for compliance with the ASME Boiler and Pressure Code, Section IX, and the ASME B315 Standard for Refrigeration and Components. Anyone familiar with the variable volume, variable flow refrigerant systems will understand the need for this certification. This is an applied product which requires hundreds and sometimes thousands of feet of pipe connected to multiple evaporators throughout the building. To that end, manufacturers of these systems will be including this requirement into their product specifications. This enhancement separates UA signatory contractors on bid day. More work will be awarded for installation by UA members who meet this qualification. The good news is that UA members are already performing at this level. The healthcare industry has benefitted greatly by a similar application for medical gas piping.

LEAN INTO: Digital Transformation

Technology is changing faster than society is. What was once a convenience has become a core element of our classroom and jobsite existence. Digital natives are now at our doorstep waiting to be trained and waiting for the opportunity to join a technology driven workforce. Learners must be taught how to acquire theory and competent skillsets in an interactive curriculum environment. Additionally, students must be open to learn anything, anytime, anywhere.

A study by Accenture highlights that for an organization to digitally transform, it must put “organizational, operational, and technological foundations in place that powers constant evolution and cross-functional collaboration.” This definition tells us that while digital technologies can be valuable tools to improve public services and reduce health and social inequalities, true digital transformation isn’t about discreet initiatives, but rather a wider and more cohesive approach to harnessing the power of technology. Indeed, if digital services are introduced in a piecemeal way, without a broader vision to provide for all in society, they may actually be in danger of excluding citizens who are either unable or unwilling to use technology.

“The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and re-learn.”  

Alvin Toffler
LEAN INTO: Modern Refrigerants

The transition to low-GWP refrigerants for residential and commercial comfort cooling and commercial refrigeration will include alternatives that are mildly flammable, highly flammable, and have a higher toxicity than those used today. Refrigerant flammability creates novel challenges for the delivery chain never before evaluated and addressed as a whole.

In response to the depleting ozone layer, the Air-Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Institute (AHRI) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have agreed to work together on the development of a global qualification’s program for refrigerant supply chain networks. Referred to as the “refrigerant driving license” (RDL), the program will target the safe handling of refrigerants to fast track the transition to higher performing mechanical systems.

The insertion of low-GWP refrigerants reduces the mass pumped by the compressors, i.e., grams of propane (R290) will transfer more heat than pounds of R-410. External market forces will hasten the implementation by many large manufacturers of HVAC and refrigeration apparatus. Hussmann has already developed and released a reach-in cooler in the food-delivery chain.

Before the end of 2020, the ITF will offer “Safe Handling of Flammable Refrigerants.” Development of this curriculum is aided by MSCA faculty with language from the ESCO Group. Additional resources are being set up to satisfy the need for training and qualification for ammonia and CO2 systems. In early August, Jim Barron, RETA Executive Director, traveled to Annapolis to discuss a new credential for industrial service technicians who work primarily on ammonia or CO2 equipment. The Certified Refrigeration Service Technician (CRST) was added on August 2018 and is designed for technicians and support personnel who troubleshoot and maintain industrial refrigeration plants and facilities. The credential addresses topics from advanced levels of plant safety and operations through the basics of ammonia refrigeration compliance and project safety management (PSM) requirements.

Do your everyday work every day. Lean forward for professional engagement to obtain maximum extension without losing your balance. Furthermore, do not lose sight of the importance of the initiatives to be managed for the security and resilience of your signatory contractors and your UA members. MG(R) Anders B. (Andy) Aadland, UA VIP Advisor, offered us advice as we were about to open the UA booth at the SAME conference in Tampa last year. He said, “Time to lean forward in the foxholes.”

For more information, contact Richard Benkowski at richb@uanet.org.

Leadership Training at the UA Education and Conference Center

Submitted by Bruce Dantley, UA Training Specialist

UA General President McManus is zealous in his investment to educate the next group of union leaders at the UA Education and Conference Center. Managers are being immersed in topics that are critical to the viability of their local unions. Leadership is about being effective and being able to make tough, well-informed decisions in turbulent times.

The UA education staff has assembled a group of subject matter experts to study a wide range of topics. The topics will include crisis management, threat mitigation, finance accounting, management accounting, and business law. In addition, corporate strategy, organizational behavior, marketing, and communications. These subjects will educate and inform the managers in making well informed and decisive decisions. These business entities are subjected to a controversial evolving world. The managers must keep organizations well positioned to meet future challenges. They must have prepared, but not limited, standards, policies, procedures, practices, and protocols. Newly elected leaders must set the tone on how an organization should be governed and run. The decisions managers make should be based on facts and data, and must be bold and decisive, not impulsive and reckless. They must never vacillate on the decision they are about to make. They should not overthink their decisions. Managers must continue to evolve, plan, and protect their local unions for future growth and earnings. Union managers must be mindful that their local union’s biggest threat will be cyber crimes and ransomware attacks on their IT infrastructure. Local unions must invest in IT technology and safeguards against those threats. A local union must be able to
operate in a mobile location during a crisis. Currently, it is being implemented in the UA General Office and many of the local unions in the U.S. and Canada.

As previously printed in the UA Journal of December 2018, the President’s Report endorses continuing education for local union officers, office professionals, organizers, and educators. It is encouraged to host or participate in seminars and conferences to maintain professional expertise.

General President McManus emphasizes that if membership believes in you, they will listen and follow you.

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**ASSE 12000 = New Normal**

Submitted by Richard Benkowski, UA Training Specialist

The COVID-19 Pandemic that has gripped the country has presented many unique challenges in all sectors of the piping industry. Hundreds of thousands of buildings are now, and have been, unoccupied. Stagnant, or standing water can cause conditions that increase the risk for growth and spread of Legionella and other biofilm-associated bacteria. Pipefitters, plumbers and HVACR service technicians in every state are pivotal in the sequence of operation for reopening an idled structure. The trucks, tools, technicians, and training of these craftsmen are critical to the public health of all Americans released to return to their interrupted workplace. Constant reminders in the news and social media predict a “new normal” for everyday activities. What does that mean? Why can’t we safely return to our interrupted lives?

**Protective Language for All**

Throughout its 100-year history, the goal of ASSE International has been to safeguard public health and safety through the use of proper plumbing, piping, and mechanical practices. As more and more facilities begin requiring training and certification in infection control, ASSE 12000 certifications will prove to be valuable credentials. These unique certifications educate and train pipe trades craftspeople, employers, building water management teams, and other construction and maintenance personnel on how to more safely work in environments with potential exposure to disease-causing pathogens.

**What is ASSE 12000?**

ASSE International first developed the voluntary consensus ASSE/IAPMO/ANSI Series 12000 in 2014 to address the hazardous nature of pathogens and infectious diseases that play dangerous roles for pipe trade workers, maintenance personnel, and other construction craftspeople. The one-of-a-kind ASSE Series 12000 sets minimum criteria for the training and certification of pipe trades craftspeople and employers on safer methods to assess, control, and work in environments with potentially deadly diseases and how to develop water risk management programs for buildings.

The Series 12000 addresses the need for construction and maintenance personnel to become proficient in identifying and managing potential situations where they may be exposed to pathogens, diseases, and hazards. This standard series also enhances the ability of personnel to protect occupants and operations from infections; especially within healthcare facilities.

“As more and more facilities begin requiring training and certification in infection control, ASSE 12000 can be a valuable tool for building managers, employers, and construction and maintenance personnel,” said Marianne Waickman, ASSE International Professional Qualifications Director. “Training and certification to this standard can show clients and employers that the individual can be trusted to work in potentially dangerous environments and responsibly perform construction and maintenance in all building types.”

**Inside ASSE 12000**

To be sure, ASSE 12000 is the only ANSI approved published language that addresses worker protection in addition to the health of the building occupants. The United Association, to date, is the only member of North America’s Building Trades Unions (NABTU) to incorporate this document into training curriculum.

ASSE 12000 and 12020 certifications address the need for construction and maintenance personnel to become proficient in identifying and managing potential situations where they may be exposed to blood borne, waterborne, and air-
borne pathogens. These certifications also cover the responsibility of personnel to protect building occupants and operations from pathogens and hazards; especially within healthcare facilities.

ASSE 12060-12063 certifications qualify contractors and tradespersons to participate on building water management teams. These certifications afford a verification and validation path to compliance with standards and guidelines related to cooling towers, water features, potable water systems, fire protection, ice machines, humidifiers, and all piped systems which currently reside in all occupied buildings.

ASSE 12080 outlines the minimum qualifications needed, including knowledge and competency, to become a member of a water safety team involved in the development of a risk assessment analysis, and water management and sampling plan, for protection from Legionella and other water-borne pathogens. Its purpose is to provide a curriculum of minimum criteria, identified by industry consensus, to ensure knowledge and understanding of standards and codes, and the resources, understanding, and skills needed to conduct a facility risk assessment and implement a water safety and management program to reduce the risk of infections due to Legionella.

An air quality focus group, under the direction of UA Director of HVACR Services Brian Kelly, has been gathered to format a section for all air systems. Stay tuned for further developments.

Everyday Work Now Demands Infection Control

A path for appropriate training to learn the applicable vocabulary and appropriate behavior is available for MCAA contractors and UA members for every craft. Hundreds of UA ASSE Certified Instructors are available in many local training centers to deliver Infection Control Risk Assessment (ICRA) and Water Quality classes to their signatory contractors and members. Now is the time to normalize your local training program. Post pandemic every day work requires reopening of buildings, protecting UA craftsmen and women, and managing the health risk for all building occupants.

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Story of How a Local Adapted to an Impossible Situation

Submitted by Kenneth Schneider, UA Training Specialist  
Story by Stephan Schnell, Local Union 467

This is my story of how my local (Local 467) adapted to an unprecedented and seemingly impossible situation, and how, as a collective group, we changed the way that our apprentices are taught.

For a few months, COVID-19 was mentioned on the news. It seemed so far away, and I never considered the impact that it might have on our everyday lives. However, in the course of one week, the lives of Californians went from everyday normal to being turned upside down. It was the week of March 9, and I started off the week flying from the Bay Area to Annapolis, Maryland, to the UA Headquarters to attend the new coordinators training. On the flight over, I saw one or two people wearing masks on the plane, including the guy next to me who talked about it for the first 15 minutes of the flight.

Throughout the week, we all watched as COVID-19 progressed from a news story to something that would drastically affect our everyday lives. I saw firsthand how the UA leadership group needed to make hard decisions by canceling training engagements and canceling planned events. In
class, I saw the pain of our Canadian brothers wondering how they were going to re-enter their country and there was even talk about the potential of the airport control towers shutting down.

The following Monday when I got back to the training center was the day that San Mateo County declared that public gatherings were prohibited. That was the same day that we had our yearly entrance exam and would normally expect people gathering as early as 4:00 a.m. to register. We typically would have a line of applicants down the driveway. Knowing the county order, we had to cancel the application intake and calm many eager men, women, and even some applicant parents.

Soon, there were new orders from the county to shelter in place. We needed to postpone the apprenticeship and journeyman training immediately. Luckily, I had a hunch that the training center would have to close, so I had the apprentices fill out a form asking them their name, current email, and cell number the previous week. That allowed me to be able to contact all the apprentices easily.

Once classes were canceled indefinitely, I communicated with our neighboring locals to discuss various options to move forward. I also reached out to our JATC, our college partners, the California Department of Apprenticeship Standards, and the California Community College Chancellor’s office. All of the governing bodies had the same message, do what you need to do to keep the classes going. For me that was the tipping point to move forward with getting the apprenticeship classes started with remote learning.

With the overwhelming support of our JATC and my business manager, Mark Burri, we decided to go forward with remote learning so that our apprentices would be able to advance to the next pay period and/or graduate. Not finishing the semester would adversely affect over 200 apprentices from the training center would have to close, so I had the apprentices fill out a form asking them their name, current email, and cell number the previous week. That allowed me to be able to contact all the apprentices easily.

The next step was securing the equipment students needed to be successful in remote learning. We were striving to keep things as simple as possible. We wanted to build equity and didn’t want the students to rely solely on their personal devices like an iPad, smartphone, desktop, laptop, or MacBook, which use a multitude of platforms to run and could be a stumbling block when trying to come up with a uniform way to present the material. The perception with technology is that it costs a lot, but much of the technology that we needed to present the material. The perception with technology is that it costs a lot, but much of the technology that we needed was free for training centers.

After talking to Abed Saeedi from Regent5, we knew that I needed to act fast because of the limited supplies available. We worked closely over the next week getting every student a Chromebook. I picked the Chromebook because I saw how simple it was to navigate. The price to acquire and manage it was less than a laptop and very appealing. I asked the students to meet us halfway. We would provide the tools and instructors, and they would need to make sure they can get to Wi-Fi and participate to the best of their ability.
A big concern of mine would be the lack of cooperation and pushback from the apprentices when we transitioned to remote learning. I sent out an email to every apprentice. The overarching theme was that they would have to meet us halfway, and in return, we would give them the opportunity to advance and we would graduate them.

After three weeks of retooling and planning, the students were able to transition from a conventional classroom environment to a remote learning environment. I was impressed that on the first night of class, our participation was above 99 percent.

I believe the silver lining in all of this is regardless of how the following semesters look like, both the instructors and students will be integrating many of the things that we had to do in future classes. Historically, the thought of learning a new software or uploading an online test would seem like a daunting task. However, when forced to do it during distance learning, many discovered that it was actually much easier to implement and manage.

One of the most rewarding parts of remote learning is getting the students together again over a Google Meet or in a Zoom meeting and seeing the smiles on their faces. The students were able to get together and talk. They could share ideas and get the guidance from their instructors about how to navigate their subjects as well as the unprecedented times. I believe a lot of the training that we provide is getting the apprentices together and talking out loud about how their day is going and offering mentorship and peer feedback and support.

We all wanted the classes to be perfect and the content to be perfect. I could not wait months for perfection to be available. Many students were out of work or working as essential workers. All were in the midst of a shelter-in-place order that had no end date. It felt like getting the students’ lives back to somewhat of a normal routine with school would be a benefit for them all. They would have access to their peers and access to their instructor and be able to talk about their day again. In my opinion, this is just as important as the class content that we provide.

Going forward, I feel like we need to have the mindset that technology, such as Chromebook or an iPad is just another tool that we can use that is no different than a power tool. Technology needs to be in our budget just like books and other classroom/shop supplies. You also need to surround yourself with technology leaders, such as a technology partner, and have technology evangelists who are already in your programs. Remember that no one can do this alone. You need to have a supportive and driven team around you. We do not know what the next semester will look like, but I can sleep at night knowing that my teachers and apprentices are prepared for whatever route we need to take. This transition seemed like an insurmountable feat at first, but when we worked together to break it into small tasks and goals, we were able to achieve something that we are all proud to be a part of.

In solidarity,
Stephan Schnell