

BUSINESS UPDATE

Vessel scaffold mockup leads charge in training skilled workers

Central South Carpenters

There's good news and bad news for the Gulf Coast industrial community. The good news is experts predict no end in sight for the boom in petrochemical and refinery markets. The bad news? The labor shortage also continues without a clear solution in sight.

As the industry competes for bodies, end-users are paying as much as — or more than — skilled labor rates for crews. Too often, however, those wage hikes are not met with a safe, competent work product.

Central South Carpenters (CSC) is taking a proactive approach to the issue and making sure plants are getting the best return on their labor investment. The first step is done: In the heart of Houston's industrial community, at 5500 Spencer Highway in Pasadena, the CSC now operates a new training center that caters specifically to the local industry's most basic — and most challenging — manpower needs.

One of the first unique training stations installed at the Pasadena training center is a vessel scaffold prop. The imposing structure simulates an actual vessel and enables carpenters to hone their skills in confined-space scaffold erection as well as octagon exterior training.

Another training station focuses on pipe-rack scaffolding. This mockup simulates embedded areas unreachable from the ground, such as along pipe bridges.

"Our job is to listen to the industry's labor needs and then create or upgrade our training to answer the call," said Central South Carpenters' Jason Engels, the organization's executive secretary-treasurer. "We recognize that there is incredible potential for this region's industrial construction industry, and we believe the best way to harness that potential is for labor, management and ownership to collaborate for the best possible jobsite outcomes."

Carpenter apprentices train in a customized, proprietary, three-year scaffold program. Journeymen regularly complete upgrade or skill-enhancement training uniquely designed for the Texas industrial community. The program is intense and includes the requirement that every scaffolder must complete at least the OSHA 10- and 40-hour scaffold qualification courses before being dispatched to a jobsite.

Training includes all scaffold types and

provides methods for platform construction and assembly techniques for frame, tube and clamp, and system scaffolds. Training teaches how to calculate capacity and contributory leg loads. It stresses scaffold access and egress and safe use guidelines, including fall protection and falling object protection. It presents training requirements for scaffold erectors, dismantlers and users.

There's a difference between a competent scaffolder and a trained, tested and formally qualified professional. Training at the new Pasadena center tests and awards credentials to those who master their skills in Scaffold Erector, Scaffold User and Scaffold Industrial Qualification. The center also trains under the Rigger & Signaler Certification Program, which meets the new rigger and signaler requirements in 29 CFR 1926 Section CC — Cranes & Derricks.

The training program includes additional qualification in:

- 30-, 40- and 60-Hour Scaffold.
- 16-Hour Welded Frame and Mobile Tower.
- 16-Hour Tube & Clamp Scaffold.
- 20-Hour Systems Scaffold.
- 8-Hour Scaffold User.
- 40-Hour Industrial Scaffold.
- Rough Terrain Forklift.
- Aerial Lift.

In addition to the qualification process, training focuses on scaffold erection, ground-supported scaffolding, formwork and shoring, suspended access/swing stage, aerial work platforms, mast-climbing work platforms, job analysis, site inspection, scaffold design, scaffold prints, material estimation, blueprint reading and confined space.

"We focus on intensive training in technical proficiency, as well as soft skills such as understanding operations worksheets and daily work schedules. We also offer customized training and on-site training if the need arises," Engels said. "Our organization is focusing a tremendous amount of resources to create transformational leaders who have outstanding communication skills. We also are providing a positive career path with rewarding employment opportunities for all of our craftspeople."

Safety remains top priority

"Providing safe and productive work is not an 'either-or' proposition for us," Engels said, who added that safety training is done in partnership with OSHA and includes OSHA 10 and 30, safety data sheets, first aid, CPR/AED, fall protection, powered industrial truck operation, and ergonomics.

"Safety is the overriding principle for accomplishing our work. We regard safety as an equal deliverable with cost and scheduling," Engels added. "On every jobsite, we develop a safety partnership with owners to protect our crews and the owner's investment. We accomplish this by removing jobsite injuries, work stoppages, and higher project costs due to illness or accidents, worker disabilities, workers' compensation claims and jobsite fatalities."

Safety training includes personal accountability, responsibility to others, understanding the owner's safety expectations, identifying and calling attention to unsafe factors, safe behavior in and around hot work areas; maintaining safety, OSHA, and communication with co-workers and supervisors during dangerous tasks.

"We instill a core value of safe work by everyone, from apprentices to superintendents, via continuous training," Engels added. "We team with the employer, project managers and owners on a project's safety program to identify, assess, monitor, manage and eliminate risks."

CSC standards regarding jobsite safety maintain consistent safety-related communications among all stakeholders prior to and throughout a project's lifecycle. The level of safety training meets and exceeds the level of inherent risk factors. A "zero-tolerance" policy is also in effect at all times regarding safety infractions and near-misses.

Unveiling the industry's best-kept secret

The Central South Carpenters represents thousands of carpenters in Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Louisiana. The largest concentration of manpower is found in Texas. The Carpenters are known in the region for their positive and teamwork-oriented attitude. Special training and on-the-job mentoring give



these men and women the knowledge and competency to meet any project schedule, budget or circumstance with a mix of in-demand skills and professionalism.

"We don't expect or want our employers to settle for anything less than elite skills and off-the-charts safety practices from our scaffolders," Engels said. "It's what our employers demand and what their customers deserve. We're all in this together."

Members of the Houston construction community are invited to tour the facility and see for themselves what CSC is doing to support the petrochemical and refinery markets.

For more information, contact Terry Darling, Houston's industrial contact for CSC, via email at tdarling@cscouncil.net or by calling (713) 449-2721.

