

Cambrian Powerline Technician Students learn the value of safety



Health and safety training is an inherent part of the curriculum for Cambrian College Powerline Technician students. As with all of the Infrastructure Health & Safety Association (IHSA) Powerline Technician training, the basic tenets of health and safety in the workplace, as well as employing safe work practices are part of each module.

IHSA staff members have been involved with the Cambrian College program since its inception in 2006. In March of that year, the Electrical & Utilities Safety Association (E&USA) and Cambrian College in Sudbury signed a partnership agreement to facilitate the first Powerline Technician Apprenticeship College Diploma (PLTN) in Ontario. This four-semester course is intended to be the

foundation of a career in the electrical utility business.

Current employees in the Powerline Technician trade are retiring at a rapid rate and a shortage of skilled Powerline Technicians is looming. A large number of new apprentices are needed to replace these skilled workers as they retire. The need for students with appropriate training is great as is the need for well-trained supervisors who will ensure new workers work safely and don't learn bad habits.

But do those lessons follow the students to their work placements and then into their apprenticeships? We asked several students and graduates how they thought their training had prepared them for their work.

Scott Norton is a second year student at Cambrian College. This was his last co-op session at Niagara Peninsula Energy Inc. He says that the program provided a solid foundation of safety information.

"Cambrian helped me learn the fundamentals of safety procedures before starting work. I learned how to use the 'Identify, Eliminate, Control, Protect and Minimize' method when preparing a tailboard, how to assess hazards in the workplace, and some of the effective means for safe conditions for work in the utility field," he says.

Norton also says the company made sure he was prepared.

"I received great safety training when I started my co-op," he says.

"The company policy was explained and we went through everything in detail, with health and safety training given in relation to our jobs. We went through the building on tour, and learned how it operates."

Brock Beverley was one of the first students in the Cambrian program. He agrees that his training in school reinforced his conviction that he shouldn't be afraid to ask questions on the job.

"I know my right to refuse, my right to know, and my right to participate. As a young worker these things are important so you can stop the dangers around you," he says.

As new workers enter the workforce we need to make sure they are taken care of and made aware of their rights and responsibilities. One day these young apprentices and students will be lead hands and supervisors and will be training yet another generation of young workers. ●