

Log books can be a powerful training tool

All powerline technician apprentices who walk through the doors of IHSA's Skills Development Centre need to be prepared for their two weeks of formal training and evaluation. The apprentices' employers should ensure they have a well-rounded training program in place that includes the *Powerline Technician Trade Skills Log Book*.

What's so important about the log book?

The *Powerline Technician Trade Skills Log Book* is based on the requirements for powerline technicians as outlined by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). It provides a complete checklist of all MTCU-required competencies from the beginning of Level One to the end of Level Four, together with space for employers to date and sign off after each skill has been successfully acquired. The completed log book acts as the apprentice's record of training.

The log book is divided into two main sections: the skill set log (yellow pages) and the central training log (green pages). Throughout the year, apprentices and their mentors work together to make sure the apprentice completes each component required for their respective year in the program.

At the Skills Development Centre

When the apprentices arrive at IHSA's Skills Development Centre, the instructor signs off in the central training log that the apprentices have demonstrated the skill. When the apprentices return to work their mentor signs off in the central training log that again the apprentices can demonstrate that skill.

Greg Williamson is a manager in IHSA's Prevention Specialty Services department. He says that often, log books have either not been filled out properly or apprentices have not completed all of the required components.

"Firms need to provide a broad range of tasks for apprentices. Those tasks then need to be documented in the log book. Then, when they come here, we evaluate and verify they have learned the required skills and fill in any gaps in their training. When they return to their employers, the supervisor will once again make sure the apprentice knows all of the requirements," says Greg.

While many companies are starting to hire apprentices in large numbers, many firms have not had to train an apprentice in some time. Greg suggests that those firms use the log book as a framework on which an apprenticeship program can be built.

"A lot of companies wonder what apprentices are actually able to do or what they should do at each level. If you open up the log book there is a list right there," says Greg.

EnWin Utilities Limited: A case study

That's exactly what Ian Murray at EnWin Utilities Limited did. Windsor's local distribution company has hired ten new year-one apprentices. The company wanted to make sure it provided a well-rounded experience, so it has taken the log book one step further.

Ian says that each component required has been added to an electronic spreadsheet. Every 30 days, the apprentices report in with their progress and it is added to the spreadsheet. This helps the utility track progress and plan ahead.

As well, the apprentices fill out a daily journal, outlining some of the step-by-step processes they use on

the job. This allows their supervisors to have a very clear picture of an apprentice's knowledge of the work.

Ian also advocates the creation of a joint apprenticeship training committee.

"This is a committee of both management and union representatives whose sole purpose is to ensure that the apprentice meets the required standards as they progress through the trade," he says.

Not only will a complete log book act as a resume of skills for an apprentice, it is required for approval to write the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal certification exam. Red Seal certification is something more and more employers are looking for from their employees.

Using the log book properly is a simple way to plan ahead for the future of your workforce. ●

