

chicago Local sponsors “Train-the-Trainer” program in CONDUIT BENDING

Chicago has long been the center of metal conduit technology thanks to long-standing city electrical codes requiring its use. “In our local we are probably the best trained work force when it comes to bending conduit in the country,” said Chicago Local 134 member Tony Griffin.

This March Local 134 decided to share its skills with other IBEW members across the United States by sponsoring—along with the National Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (NJATC) and the Steel Tube Institute—a train-the-trainer program on conduit bending skills.



IBEW members work with a conduit bender. Pictured from left, Herb Spradlin, Madison, Wis., Local 159, James Tisdale, Baltimore Local 24, Bill Beck, Warren, Ohio, Local 573, and Jay Morris, Omaha, Neb., Local 22.

Conduits are galvanized steel pipes which electrical wires are run through. By grounding the wire, it prevents a short from turning into a fire. A major part of installing conduit consists of bending the pipes to exact specifications to connect the wires between junction boxes. While required in most of commercial construction, it is rarely used in residential except in the Chicago area.

Local 134 member Harry Ohde, who teaches electrical code at the NJATC's National Training Institute's center in Knoxville, Tenn., noticed last year that there were no classes offered in conduit bending. So Ohde approached NJATC Executive Director Michael Callanan about developing a hands-on conduit bending train-the-trainer class.

The week-long class was more than just instruction in the basics of conduit bending—it was an opportunity for the attendees to take what they learned back to their home locals. “We wanted

to make sure that the attendees were ready to train their own members when they got back,” Ohde said. “Each participant left Chicago with ideas on building a better conduit bending curriculum and how to be a better instructor.”

Basing their curriculum on the newly issued NJATC conduit bending training manual, Ohde and Griffin—with help from Local 134 Business Manager Timothy Foley and Chicago JATC Training Director John Donahue—put the 20 attendees through nine hours of intensive training each day. “From seven to five we worked these guys hard bending pipe,” Ohde said.

Many local vendors of conduit technology also attended, donating tools and materials to the class that many attendees took home to use in their own trainings.

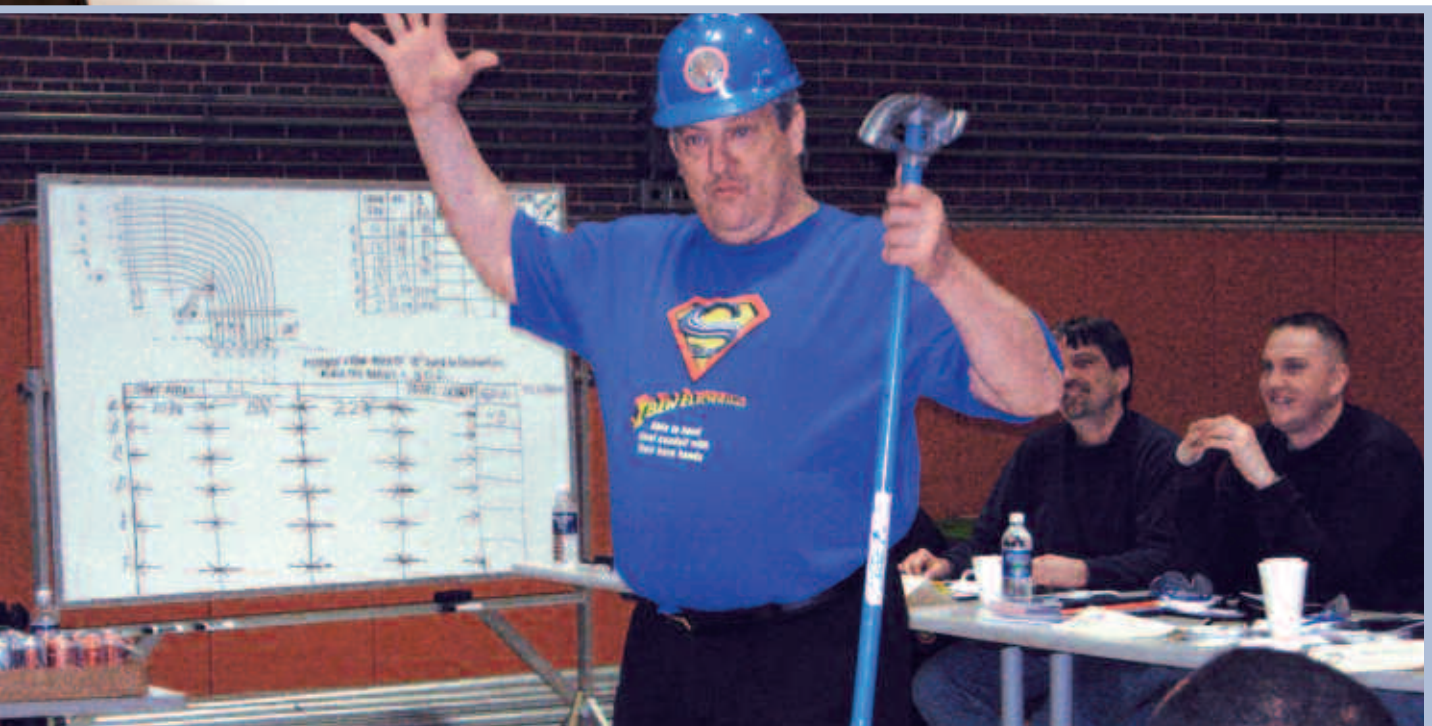
For Callanan, Local 134's training is a great opportunity to strengthen union construction by giving members skills

that will make them a lot more attractive to contractors.

IBEW Director of Construction and Maintenance Mark Ayers said the pipe-bending class is the beginning of a more flexible approach to training the next generation of union tradesmen that will make the union more competitive against nonunion contractors.

“We always focused on having our members be able to do everything well before they got started on a job, but that is not necessarily the most realistic option if we want to compete,” Ayers said. “If a job needs pipe benders, then we will start training new members on pipe bending first so they have productive skills the first day on the job.”

Based on the success of the March trainings, Local 134 plans to repeat the class at the end of June. “We hope what we are doing in Chicago can be a model for other locals,” Foley said. “It's training like this that keeps (the IBEW) ahead of the curve.”



Chicago Local 134 member Harry Ohde teaches pipe bending class. Pictured the from left, Kerry Chesterfield, Albany, NY, Local 236 and Tom Lauchenauer, San Francisco Local 6.