

› Moving from Front Lines to Power Lines

Ann Randazzo, Executive Director, Center for Energy Workforce Development

There is no better way to honor the nation's returning veterans than to provide them with the training and support they need to transition successfully to civilian life. Through the Troops to Energy Jobs initiative, the nation's electric and gas industries are creating a pathway for our veterans to translate their military skills into a successful energy sector career.

Troops to Energy Jobs opens a needed and natural employment pipeline between the military and our country's energy industries. In 2009, the Center

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for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD) conducted a study that projected that roughly 40 percent of electric and natural gas utility workers will have the potential to retire or leave for other reasons in the next five years. To put that figure into perspective, it represents more than one-third of the total workforce at our nation's electric and gas utilities.

This means that in the near-term, the country will need thousands of engineers, technicians, line workers, plant operators, and pipefitters for jobs in traditional energy industries, as well as for new openings being created in wind, solar, and other renewable energy fields.

While we are looking for new workers, the other reality is that veterans returning from active duty, especially men aged 18 to 24, are having trouble finding jobs. Many are returning home without a clear path toward a job, or the ability to apply the skills they learned in the armed services. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 190,000 to 200,000 active-duty personnel will separate from the military annually over the next quarter-century.

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CEWD is managing the Troops to Energy Jobs initiative. We are working with the departments of Defense, Labor, and Energy; state agencies; community colleges; unions; the American Council on Education; and education companies. Together, we have created a unique coalition among the U.S. military, the educational community, and the energy industry.

Our goal is to speed up—and streamline—the process of moving from the front lines to the power lines. Troops to Energy Jobs will communicate energy career pathways to veterans before and after they separate from the military. In addition, transition coaches knowledgeable about the energy industry, academic advisors, and energy company mentors will serve as support systems for veterans.

Six utilities are serving as pilot programs to get Troops to Energy Jobs up and running: American Electric Power, Arizona Public Service, Dominion, National Grid, Pacific Gas and Electric, and Southern Company. These utilities are developing and refining a national model for quickly and effectively connecting the

stream of qualified veterans to jobs that will be opening in the energy sector.

Companies sponsoring the program include Constellation Energy Group, Inc.; Duke Energy Corporation; Edison International; Entergy Corporation; Exelon Corporation; FirstEnergy Corporation; NextEra Energy, Inc.; Northeast Utilities; NV Energy; Pepco; PPL Corporation; and Progress Energy.

We have created a website to offer more information and insight on Troops to Energy Jobs—www.getintoenergy.com/military. I encourage you to visit it and learn more about this exciting and innovative partnership between energy companies and America's armed services. The site will give you more information about the initiative, including details on the five job classifications likely to have the most openings, plus a database of in-demand military occupational specialties. ©

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