

WHO WE ARE:

The NSSB is building a voluntary national system of skill standards, assessment and certification that will enhance the ability of the United States workforce to compete effectively in a global economy. These skills are being identified by industry in full partnership with education, labor, civil rights and community-based organizations. The standards will be based on high performance work and will be portable across industry sectors.

Utility Industry Group to Begin Work on Skill Standards

In a significant move to address the critical need for strong standards in their industry, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), the Edison Electric Institute (EEI), and the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the Utility Industry Group (UIG) that will begin the work of developing skill standards for the electric utility industry. This agreement was reached following numerous discussions that began last year when the IBEW and the EEI approached the NSSB with plans to address an anticipated, acute shortage of qualified workers in the electric industry.

According to the IBEW and the EEI, the electric industry is experiencing problems attracting new workers to replace those lost to attrition, partly due to the booming economy offering alternative employment opportunities. More importantly however, management and labor officials acknowledge that recognized and proper industry training and certification are necessary to ensure continued system reliability and worker safety. For some time, both sides have advocated for Congressional legislation mandating industry training and certification requirements. Both sides hope that developing skill standards under the auspices of the NSSB will help fill this gap.

Under the terms of the memorandum, the IBEW and the EEI agree to the following:

- To assist the industry in developing core skill standards for all industry-related positions
- To define concentrations in the full industry sector with the assistance of NSSB's technical experts
- To fully develop skill standards for at least two relevant concentrations
- To work with the gas transmission and distribution industry to integrate them into an eventual Voluntary Partnership

For its part, the NSSB will provide limited general, technical, and industry research assistance to help the UIG begin the preliminary task of developing skill standards. While no timeline has been established for the release of the standards, all sides agree that they are necessary for the industry.

Jim Tomaseski, International Representative for the IBEW, understands the impact of the current electric industry restructuring and recognizes the need for a baseline certification process for journeyman lineman to ensure the reliability and safety of the electric supply system. "The model of NSSB standards certification is a model that fits our needs and will allow us to focus on initial areas" that require attention.

Chuck Kelly, EEI's Director of Industry Human Resource Issues, expressed hope that "the opportunity to work together (with the IBEW and the NSSB) ... will, in the end, benefit the nation's electric customers" by ensuring a consistent, qualified workforce



News Scan

Corporate Giant Endorses the Work of the NSSB

In a further sign that Corporate America stands behind skill standards, Corning Incorporated announced its wholehearted support for the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) and its efforts to create a voluntary, national system of skill standards, certification, and assessment.

Stressing the need for a skill standards system for the U.S. economy, Mr. Roger G. Ackerman, Corning's Chairman and CEO, writes:

In the face of economic globalization, our success will depend not on our ability to outproduce our competitors; rather it will depend on our ability to harness the power of technology and deliver top quality products and services to our valued customers on time, requiring a highly skilled workforce to do the job. Unfortunately, barely half of all new employees entering the workforce possess these critical skills, imperiling our vibrant economy and the prosperity we enjoy. This existing "skills gap" must be closed if we are to remain the number one economic power in the world.

Corning recognizes the importance of a highly skilled workforce and its contributions to any company's success. As technological advances make possible the creation of new products and services, workers must learn new and more sophisticated skills to keep pace. Empowering its employees with the necessary skills and knowledge will ensure that Corning remains an industry leader producing high quality goods and services to its customers worldwide. Corning's outlook on the future mirrors that of the NSSB. Applying this concept throughout the country will no doubt enhance our country's competitive edge worldwide.

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Message from the Executive Director



Edie West
Executive Director

This year marks a turning point for the NSSB. Building on the progress achieved in 1999, we look forward to 2000 and the anticipated release of skill standards for two major economic sectors. We hope that you will join our effort to build a national system of skill standards, assessment, and certification - a system that will work FOR YOU.

In the coming months, the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) and the Sales and Service Voluntary Partnership, Inc. (S&SVP) will complete work on their respective validation studies on proposed skill standards. Once completed, the use of skill standards for nearly 45 percent of America's workers will come into practice. The Education and Training Voluntary Partnership (E&TVP) will work on developing skill

standards while the Communications and Utility Industry Groups pull together their applications for Voluntary Partnership recognition. The Hospitality and Tourism Sector has submitted an application while Finance and Insurance promises its own within the next two months. So you see, it won't be long thereafter before the rest of America's workforce will enjoy the host of benefits that skill standards will deliver. Until then, the Board and NSSB Staff will be hard at work to ensure the success of this system.

To that end, the Board is focusing efforts on preparing for system implementation. At its annual retreat on December 9-10, 1999, at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, the Board formally approved the new Integration and Implementation (I&I) Committee. This committee will focus on the launch of skill standards into the marketplace.

The Board will hold its next quarterly Board meeting March 20-22, 2000, at the Isle of Capri Crowne Plaza Resort in the coastal resort of Biloxi, Mississippi. Among the issues to be discussed will be the impending rollout of skill standards for the manufac-

turing and the sales and service sectors, progress made by E&TVP, and continuing activities among the remaining industry groups. You are invited to attend the Open Board Meeting that is tentatively scheduled for 8:30am on Wednesday, March 22nd. Log on to our website at <http://www.nssb.org> for the most recent update to the Board Meeting agenda.

Speaking of our website, NSSB Online is getting better every month. Not only have we added to our database of certification apprenticeship programs and our directory of skill certification organizations, we have added a new State Skill Standards Information Database designed to disseminate helpful information on state skill standards programs around the country. Our goal is to have as much information on programs from every state. Check it out now at <http://www.nssb.org>.

We've come a long way since our beginnings back in 1994. With each new year, the NSSB gets closer to its goal. Skill standards are just around the corner. Watch for them!

Education and Training Gets Down to Work

The Education and Training Voluntary Partnership's (E&TVP) Decision Council met on February 2-3, 2000, in Washington, DC, to begin the work of developing skill standards for the preliminary target groups of: entry-level child care workers, instructional paraprofessionals/paraeducators, and corporate trainers.

At this meeting, the Council met with the National Skill Standards Board's (NSSB) technical team for an overview of the skill standards development process. Two major accomplishments of the meeting were the approval of a mission statement to guide the work of the council and the development of a working plan that charts out the course for the Council's subcommittees from now through Spring 2001.

"We had a very productive meeting. The stakeholders showed a high level of commitment, and the Decision Council left the

meeting with a clearer understanding of what their roles will be," commented Konyka Dunson, Associate with E&TVP, who attended the two-day meeting.

During the next 18 months, the Council will work in collaboration with the technical team to develop the first-ever core, national skill standards for this comprehensive industry



sector of the economy. Applying their individual areas of expertise, Council members will contribute their knowledge and organizational resources in developing the core content of the skill standards, assessment and certification strategies. The Education and Training Voluntary Partnership will publicize this effort to generate widespread participation in the project.

For information on the Education and Training Voluntary Partnership, please contact Ms. Konyka Dunson at (202) 393-6326 or by e-mail at kdunson@aft.org.

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Corning Incorporated creates leading-edge technologies for fast-growing segments of the world's economy. Corning is a premier provider of optical fiber, cable, and photonic products for the telecommunications industry; high-performance glass for computers, television screens, and other information display applications; advanced optical materials for the semiconductor industry and the scientific community; ceramic substrates for the automotive industry; specialized polymer products for biotechnology applications; and other advanced materials and technologies.

Corning also competes in the environmental, scientific and life sciences markets. Its innovative technology for the advanced materials market has resulted in products for lighting and emissions systems for the automotive industry, heat resistant and specialty glasses for the space shuttle, medical laboratory glass and mirror blanks used in the world's largest observatory telescopes.

S&SVP Launches Ad Campaign

Once you develop skill standards, how do you let the public know that they are here and ready to use? ADVERTISING! The Sales and Service Voluntary Partnership, Inc. (S&SVP) has launched a national ad campaign to introduce the Partnership and inform its online visitors about skill standards.

The Voluntary Partnership recently overhauled its website (<http://www.ssvolpart.org>) to give it a new, sharper look and provide more information about the Partnership and its products. The site's homepage prominently features a fortune cookie – the central image of the campaign – to inform visitors that their fortunes and futures lie in skill standards!

The S&SVP launched this campaign at the NRF Annual Convention in January. Attendees learned about the website at the

NRF Foundation booth, where S&SVP staff gave away fortune cookies containing the website address. Conventioneers loved the unique packaging and enjoyed a treat while getting the message about skill standards. An additional 100,000 subscribers saw the ad in the convention issue of *Stores* magazine.

The campaign will run for the next six months. In addition to the fortune cookie, another ad featuring a movie ticket will debut shortly, targeted at specific audiences throughout the country. The fortune cookie ad was placed in AARP magazine and several trade publications; over the next few months, both ads will be seen in select, national publications reaching

the public and S&SVP industries. Be on the lookout for the fortune cookie, and visit S&SVP online today!



MSSC Prepares for Validation of Skill Standards

Last year was very successful for the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC). Extensive research yielded the work portion of the draft skill standards for manufacturing in: production; production process development; quality assurance; logistics and inventory control; health, safety and environmental assurance; and maintenance, installation and repair. And 2000 is shaping up to be even more productive!

In 1999, the MSSC conducted research using expert panels to identify critical work functions, key activities and performance indicators. These panels consisted of geographically and ethnically diverse front-line workers, team leaders and first line supervisors from high performance/best practice firms. The participants were also diverse in terms of gender, age, and education levels. To ensure that the draft standards were truly reflective of the work in the industry, the MSSC conducted numerous site visits and interviews. Over 270 workers from 17 different states participated in this effort. All fourteen manufacturing sub-industries and seven firm size categories were represented.

With this work complete, the next step is validation! And just what does validation mean? It is a process that gives people confidence that the MSSC has developed standards that meaningfully and accurately represent front-line manufacturing work. An important milestone in the work of the MSSC, validation will involve over 6,000 manufacturing workers across the country in all aspects of manufacturing.

Currently, the MSSC is coordinating sites to pilot test the survey. The pilots are scheduled for the first few weeks of February at a number of locations around the country. Validation will begin a few weeks after the pilot tests are complete. The MSSC is recruiting high performance/best practice manufacturing firms to participate in this exciting opportunity. Participants in the validation effort will receive advance copies of the standards and customized reports.

To learn more about this validation effort and to get more information, visit the MSSC website at <http://www.msscusa.org> or contact Ms. LeeSa Gerst, MSSC Communications Director, at 202-216-2745.

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for the industry. He adds that working with IBEW in this endeavor will "make our industry safe and successful for its customers and workers in the future."

The IBEW, affiliated with the AFL-CIO, is the oldest and largest electrical union in the world representing a membership of 750,000 in both the United States and Canada. Founded in 1891 in the United States as the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the IBEW represents workers in multiple subsectors of the electrical industry. The Edison Electric Institute is an association of U.S. shareholder-owned electric companies, international affiliates and industry associates worldwide whose approximately 210 U.S. members generate three-quarters of all the electricity in this country.

State Partnership Initiative: Making the State Standards Connection

In an effort to incorporate the skill standards of state systems, the NSSB held a meeting with state representatives on October 28, 1999, at its offices in Washington, DC. This was the first of what promises to be many meetings between the NSSB and its state partners with the overall aim of developing a national system that encompasses effective skill standards already used by states across the country.

“State connections and partnerships are essential to building an integrated state and national skill standards system. With this collaboration, the United States will continue to lead the world’s economy with a highly skilled workforce in the 21st century,” commented Susan Auld, Vice Chair of the NSSB’s new Integration and Implementation Committee.

This first-of-its-kind gathering met to identify the commonalties among individual state systems and the proposed national system under development by the NSSB. As a starting point, meeting participants identified critical “must have” themes for the national system, among them:

- Employer ownership and recognition of credentials
- Widespread support from the education community
- Accessible and affordable products
- Effective delivery systems
- Continuous improvements and updates of standards
- Implementation flexibility

The meeting next addressed the impact of a national system on states and identified the commonalties and differences between individual states and the proposed national system. Issues that came under discussion included: understanding each other’s “common language,” methodologies, research methods, and certification and assessment processes. The meeting also addressed possible linkages in terms of framework, content, assessment, and processes and established a State Skill Standards Working Group (SSSWG) to provide ongoing assistance on these and other technical issues to the states as the national system takes root. (At press time, the SSSWG is scheduled to meet on February 22-23, 2000, at the NSSB offices in Washington, DC).

A number of state representatives assisted in facilitating the meeting. Among them was Lee Rector, Director of the Texas Skill Standards Board, and Jeff Edstrom of the Council of Great Lakes Governors (CGLG), both recognized national experts on skill standards. Both the State of Texas and the CGLG have made considerable progress in the skill standards arena. Representatives from Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin, also attended this meeting and provided their input.

The NSSB hopes that working with individual states during the development phase will strengthen the national system by incorporating the proven successes of state programs. Creating a national system that works in tandem with its state counterparts will also help avoid any potential obstacles concerning certification and the acceptance of national skill standards throughout the country.

Meeting Dates			
NSSB	<u>May 16, 2000</u>	MSSC	S&SVP
<u>March 22, 2000</u>	Location TBA Washington, DC	Semi-Annual Meeting	Annual Meeting
Isle of Capri Crowne Plaza Resort Biloxi, Mississippi		<u>June 1-2, 2000</u>	<u>April 13-14, 2000</u>
		Double Tree Hotel (Airport) Seattle, WA	Grand Hyatt Hotel Washington, DC

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