



KARI BREEDLOVE

Journeyworker Limited Maintenance Electrician

Metro Limited Maintenance Electrician JATC

Mulino, Oregon



Kari grew up in a household where both of her parents worked in manufacturing, so she always knew about the benefits of the field, and she entered it as soon as she was able to work to work. After working as an assembler, she landed a job in maintenance at [Sunstone Circuits](#). She excelled at the job and, as she moved up, she learned that her manager, the head electrician of the company, was near retirement. Electricians

“I absolutely love having the freedom of my own learning experience.”

are in short supply, and companies are relying more and more on apprenticeship programs to train the younger generation of workers to replace retirees. When her boss referred her to the Portland Community College (PCC) Electrical Apprenticeship Program, she was thrilled.

During the program, Kari worked non-stop. She worked full-time at Sunstone Circuits and attended school at PCC two nights a week; through it all, she was a single mother to two daughters. In her apprenticeship program, she loved learning the details about how electricity works and the in-depth encrypted codes in the electrician's codebook. Kari says that,

thanks to the apprenticeship program, she jumped into the field faster than she could have ever imagined. It was hard, but it was worth it.

Since finishing her apprenticeship, Kari has grown in her position at Sunstone and is now inspired to get her PhD in electrical engineering. Recently, her manager retired, and all things electrical at the company were shifted to her responsibility. Kari says she loves the responsibility and the freedom to troubleshoot issues with the knowledge she has gained.

“That’s probably one of the biggest benefits of the apprenticeship, is that it’s so transferrable—you are in the trade. It was really nice to be able to go into work and be able to practice.”

There were not very many women in her apprenticeship program, and being a woman in a male-dominated field has been a challenge. She says she feels pressure to “prove herself,” but this pushes her to excel. Now that she has completed the program and is using her new skills, Kari says she feels more respected and more helpful as a person. Kari’s advice to future apprentices is to never stop learning and to use the program as a stepping stone.

Q: WHAT DOES A MAINTENANCE ELECTRICIAN DO?

A: Maintenance Electricians work in all phases of the residential electrical construction and service industry. They do the electrical construction work on projects ranging from single-family residences to apartment complexes. Workers install wiring for power, lighting and specialized systems on such dwellings. They also perform repair and maintenance on existing dwellings.