



After completing his apprenticeship, Eben McWhorter is now a journeyman welder at Graham County Electric and Utilities.

Two Earn Journeyman Welder Status

Graham County Electric and Utilities crew members finalize 18-month program

It has been a long 18 months, but Eben McWhorter and Juan Carreon have completed their journeyman welder apprenticeship. This accomplishment allows them to be promoted to journeyman welders for Graham County Electric and Utilities.

The rigorous apprenticeship involves becoming operator qualified in 43 critical natural gas functions. Training for these tasks includes testing the apprentice in their knowledge of operations manuals, procedures and hands-on proficiency that is held to not only the high standards of GCU, but federal and state standards.

Eben started with Graham County Utilities in 2008 as a helper in the gas and water department. He says he has enjoyed welding since shortly after graduating from high school. He says his most exciting welding job was making iron doors for a custom door company.

Juan started part time with Graham County Utilities in 2007 and quickly advanced to full time in 2008.

"I've been impressed with both employees and their willingness to advance quickly in a difficult journey, and I'm proud of them," says supervisor Wes Reidhead.

Juan and Eben finished the GCU welder apprentice

program on January 10 by successfully completing "hot taps" on a live gas main, using the oxygen/acetylene welding process.

Each welder has also performed other functions that are key to their role as journeyman welders, including certification in the SMAW (arc) and OXY/acetylene welding processes.

The journeyman welding certificate allows them to perform as "combination welders," which makes them highly functional field welders for GCEC/GCU.

Eben says you prepare your work by cutting the pipe, cleaning it and having the proper equipment. All welding samples were sent to a third-party contractor to be X-rayed and critiqued.

"You don't want your weld to be covered in 'pits,'" he says. "It had to be perfect."

Financial family stability is why Eben spent many long weekends at the plant practicing. Juan wanted to spread his wings and learn functionality of different jobs within the gas and water department. Giving back to the community, Eben is active in his church being involved in youth activities and is a volunteer Pima firefighter. ■