

Sparky's Current Events



Welcome Back Students!

We trust that you've all had a chance to disconnect a bit this summer, and that you all found positive and nourishing opportunities to breathe, relax and renew. Classes kicked off the week of September 13th and we are welcoming new students and returning students! Our first 2 weeks of school were a hub of activity with new apprentice students taking Core Curriculum where each student is taught the importance of workplace safety. Learning proper safety protocols from day one ensures our future tradespeople incorporate PPE and safety into their jobs as part of their everyday routine. Our Building/Property Maintenance students are already immersed in hands-on learning and the sound of power tools is like music to our ears! Not only are our students learning about power tools, but we take it old school with hand tools like hand saws and hammers so that our students are prepared for whatever comes their way!

For this fall semester, there are over 70 students taking classes. We have 37 brand new students starting their education with VTA and 36 returning students continuing their education in our Apprenticeship classes (Levels 2-4) and our accelerated Adult Career classes. Of the returning students, 5 will be completing their Apprenticeship classes in HVAC (2) and Electrical (3) on October 29th. They are on the homestretch! We already have several companies requesting résumés from our future graduates. They are eager to fill open positions with well-trained candidates!

Our returning students are setting the bar high for our new students. It is thrilling to hear them share their work experiences with the new students and how the knowledge they are gaining in class is being reinforced on the job. The excitement of our students, both new and returning, is palpable and makes VTA a fun place to be... it's never too late **to learn, apply, thrive!**

Our continued success is thanks to the hard work and purposeful planning by our instructors and staff as we continue to grow. Our commitment is to keep each of our students engaged, safe and focused on their academic goals. With this unprecedented growth, we are pleased to welcome several new instructors into the VTA family. Please help us in welcoming Mr. Dean Thomasson (Plumbing) and Mr. Mike Hovan (Electrical).

MASKS ARE REQUIRED ON CAMPUS

As a continued safety precaution, we will be physically distancing and wearing face coverings on campus. Even within the classrooms, masks are required regardless of your vaccination status for the safety of others who may be at higher risk of serious consequences of the coronavirus.

We ask that should you be experiencing any COVID symptoms, or if you have been exposed to a person who is COVID positive, that you refrain from coming on campus, and please contact our Admissions office to make arrangement for at-home learning during your absence.

~by Tammy Langfeld



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Building Maintenance Course

If you have ever lived in an apartment, you will know that when anything goes wrong with the appliances, heating, air conditioning or plumbing, it's an easy call to the leasing office or maintenance department. All apartment complexes have a maintenance staff to handle minor repairs.

Currently, many apartment complexes are short staffed for maintenance technicians. There are numerous openings for maintenance staff in Hampton Roads and Williamsburg. VTA gets phone calls every day asking to hire our students!

So, what does it take to be a building maintenance technician? If you were to attend Virginia Technical Academy's Building Maintenance apprenticeship course, you would learn a diversified skill set needed to maintain and renovate commercial and residential buildings. All courses start with an OSHA 10 Safety Class, for on-the-job safety. Then basic construction math such as how to measure and calculate the quantity of material you may need for your projects. The course comprises of six major parts: carpentry, electrical, plumbing, heating & air-conditioning (HVAC), appliance repair and maintenance, and professional development. Here are some of the skills students learn:

In carpentry, students will learn the different types of lumber, how to install wall studs and joists, and how to install and repair drywall. Students will also learn how to identify types and shapes of molding, how to make miter cuts, and nailing techniques.

In electrical, students will learn fundamentals of basic electricity, be able to describe the difference between AC and DC currents, correctly measure wire size and load carrying capacity, understand the operation and functions of emergency circuits, be able to wire and install light switches, receptacles, light fixtures, and ceiling fans.

In plumbing, students will learn to identify and select basic plumbing tools for specific applications; identify and select the proper type of piping, fittings, hangers and supports. They will also learn how to repair and install plumbing fixtures, garbage disposers, pipes, fittings, and solder copper and apply caulking.

In HVAC, students are introduced to the fundamentals and basic refrigeration cycle, tools, instruments and supplies commonly used, and they will earn an EPA card so that they can handle refrigerants. Students will learn how to perform refrigerant system service, check refrigerant charge, and repair refrigerant leaks. Students will also learn how to troubleshoot and do preventive maintenance on air conditioning and heating systems.

In the appliance section, students will learn how common household appliances work and how to do preventive maintenance on them. They will also learn how to troubleshoot and do repairs on appliances such as dishwashers, washers, dryers, refrigerators, microwaves, and ranges.

Finally, the professional development portion teaches students effective email and phone communication, job search skills and interviewing techniques, and the skills employers require for positive work relationships and long-term employment. Students will be expected to achieve competencies in problem solving, customer service, interpersonal and teamwork skills.

The Building Maintenance Course has two levels to make it more affordable to students. It is highly recommended to complete both levels to get the full training necessary for job placement and performance. Each level is 150 hours, and is offered both at night (Mon, Wed, & Thurs) or day (Mon-Fri). The complete course is 300 hours total.

The Building Maintenance Course is a great introduction to all the trades taught at VTA and if a student is not sure which trade to pursue, completing the Building Maintenance course will help with the decision.

This course is also good for homeowners or rental property owners. To be able to make minor repairs yourself instead of paying someone else to do them will save a lot of money. And if you do not do the repairs yourself, at least you have an idea of what your repair person is telling you!

Breaking Bad(ly): Defective Circuit Breaker Panels Pose Ongoing Hazard

So, you've finally found your dream house and are ready to sign the loan papers. The price is agreed upon, the realtor has walked you through all the features, and you're already imagining your plans for the spare bedroom. But there's one question you may have forgotten to ask the seller:

"Can I have a look at the circuit breaker panel?"

Granted, it's a bit of an odd request. But, if you are purchasing (or already live in!) an older home, having a quick peek at your panel may save you from expensive repairs – or, more devastatingly, a house fire.

Just like cars, there are different brands and models of breaker panels out there. Most of them are perfectly good equipment; Square D, General Electric, Siemens, and Eaton-Cutler-Hammer are quality brands that should last as long as your home. However, there are some older panels still in homes that probably should be inspected and/or replaced. These breaker panels may be ineffective at best and downright dangerous at worst. Just as you would, or should, have a mechanic inspect a pre-owned car you're thinking of purchasing, you should have your home inspector give you a thorough report on your breaker panel.

According to the Consumer Safety Institute, there are two electrical panels to especially watch out for; they are Federal Pacific and Zinsco. The Federal Pacific panel was very popular from the 1950s to 1980s, but over time, home inspectors have found as many as 60% of all Federal Pacific panels did not provide the protection they were supposed to. In addition, the New Jersey State Court held that Federal Pacific Electric violated the Consumer Fraud Act by knowingly and purposefully distributed circuit breakers that were not tested to meet Underwriters Laboratory standards.

The Zinsco panels are mostly obsolete today. But if you do happen to find one, do know that this panel would not pass safety codes today.

If you discover you have one of these outdated panels, have an electrician replace it with a quality panel as soon as possible. It's not a cheap job – expect between \$1,000 and \$4,000. However, it's worth the peace of mind knowing your home isn't harboring a fire hazard.

Something else to think about: homes built 40 or 50 years ago did not have as much electrical needs as homes built today. So, if you move into one of these older homes that has a 100-amp service electrical panel, but you need 200 amps for all your electronics, there's a disconnect! Or there should be! Upgrade your panel! And check your insurance because many insurance companies will no longer insure a home with less than 100 Amp/240 Volt service. Play it safe – don't get burned by bad panels!

~by Nick Mobley

Editor's Note: Always match the brand of breakers with the brand of the panel.

Job Fair! October 22nd . 10am-2pm

Virginia Technical Academy will be hosting a Job Fair on Friday, October 22, from 10:00am to 2:00pm at our school.

This a great opportunity for both companies and potential employees to network and build connections in the trade industry. VTA has partnered with over 100 companies in the local area who have either hired our students in the past or who have sent their own employees for training. We are proud to have a 100% hire rate at VTA!

Our students are preparing their résumés and are polishing up on their interviewing skills. Job seekers can apply and interview on the spot.

With just 35 company spots available for this Job Fair, companies are encouraged to register soon, as this is a first-come-first-serve event!

Please RSVP by Monday, October 18 by calling the Admissions Office at 757.586.5322 or email to: admission@VTAcademy.com

Please note, for this Job Fair:

Masks/face coverings are mandatory.

Children will not be permitted.

Registration is required.

Did you know?

Home inspectors have only been required to have a license in the state of Virginia since July 1, 2017. Prior to this date, the regulation of home inspections in Virginia was a voluntary certification. And, according to the American Society of Home Inspectors, 22 states have no licensing requirements for home inspectors!

In addition, there are no national standardized requirements; every state has different requirements to become a home inspector. Some states require 60 hours of education; some require almost 200.

For more information go to:
www.dpor.virginia.gov.

Application Information:

https://www.dpor.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/boards/ALHI/A506-3380LIC_pdf.pdf

Upcoming Events

October 7: Gubernatorial candidate Glenn Youngkin to visit VTA, 8:00am to 9:00am

October 11: Columbus Day School is OPEN!

October 22: Job Fair! 10:00am-2:00pm

October 27: EPA-608 one-day course, 8am-4pm



“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Virginia Technical Academy was founded on the principle that every community needs a skilled and well-educated workforce. Our goal is to provide an environment that will exceed the educational requirements and needs of both future tradespeople and their employers.

MISSION STATEMENT

Virginia Technical Academy is dedicated to keeping our trades strong through education, validation, and professional networking.

PLEASE
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