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[Chris Kaufman, an SPU Lead Electric Line Worker, and Jacob Dowden, an SPU Apprentice Line Worker, talk to students about utility pole climbing equipment at Sun Prairie East High School.]

Presentations encourage energy interest in Sun Prairie East High School students

SUN PRAIRIE, (Wis.) - Three local line workers and educators with Wisconsin's K-12 Energy Education Program took a field trip to the city's East High School in early April to talk to students about energy and the jobs that use it in the community.

The sky was clear for the first day of presentations, so students could step outside their classrooms and meet some of the local professionals outdoors at their designated tables. Chris Kaufman, Sun Prairie Utilities (SPU) Lead Electric Line Worker, and Jacob Dowden, an SPU Apprentice Line Worker, discussed how line workers generally construct and maintain the electric distribution system in the City of Sun Prairie. Students had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the personal protection equipment every crew member has to use to stay safe and explore a bucket truck - a useful tool that helps the crew work on utility poles high in the air or lay electrical wires underground.

On the second and last day, Dowden and Hayden Shefchik, another Line Worker Apprentice, met with students indoors and showed them the tools of their trade.

Students could touch samples of wire SPU uses across the city and hear how line workers set them up to distribute electricity.

[Jacob Dowden and Hayden Shefchik, SPU Apprentice Line Workers, show Sun Prairie East High School students the personal protection equipment crews must use.]

Throughout both days, students learned about the two main ways to get into the profession.



The traditional path is going to school through a nine-month Electrical Power Distribution program. Several colleges in the state provide this program, including Blackhawk Technical College in Janesville, Chippewa Valley Technical College in Eau Claire, Moraine Park Technical College's Beaver Dam Campus, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College in Fennimore, and Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in Green Bay. After completing the program, the next step would be to start a job search and, after being hired, the employer would sponsor you in an Electric Line Worker Apprenticeship program.

If a college program doesn't suit you, the other route relies on advancement opportunities through a utility. Work up from a less-experience-heavy position to receive sponsorship in the four-year Electric Line Worker Apprenticeship program.

KEEP, Wisconsin's K-12 Energy Education Program, presented two sessions, too. Wendy Stelzer discussed energy conservation with students and showed them how to perform a light audit using tools from one of KEEP's Energy Audit Kits. Using a light meter, students compared the recommended light levels of different spaces with the actual lumens in those spaces, determining that the classroom did not need to have all the banks of lights turned on in order to be adequately lit. Students found the bathrooms were also overlit compared to recommended levels.

Outside (at least until it started raining), Heather Phelps discussed renewable energy and then shared KEEP's Solar Tilt Kit with the students. They started by using a pyranometer to measure solar irradiance to predict which locations and situations (sunny, shady, or reflected off a surface) would be best for solar panels. Then students used solar panels and multimeters to measure the potential voltage in those different

locations. Finally, in both sessions, students learned about how these topics might relate to future careers in the energy field.

Overall, students got a hands-on opportunity that could spark an interest in an energy-related career.

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