BAKER TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

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BTI Announces Partnership with OTEC to Launch a Lineman School in Baker City, Oregon

New state-of-the-art regional training center aimed at addressing a shortage of skilled utility workers

BAKER CITY, OR – Baker Technical Institute (BTI) is pleased to announce plans to launch a new electrical lineworker school in Baker City, Oregon, for students wanting to train in utility power distribution, construction, maintenance, troubleshooting, and repair. BTI will partner with Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) to build a new training center in the industrial park south of the current OTEC headquarters, on approximately 30 acres recently purchased from Baker City. The announcement comes after several years of preparation and planning to bring this vision to life. Construction will begin as soon as possible, and training is set to commence in the fall of 2024.

BTI is launching its electrical lineworker school at a time when the employment of electrical powerline workers is expected to grow, largely due to increasing electrical grid needs around the country. The industry reports a significant shortage of skilled trade workers, including linemen and other related positions. An aging workforce that is

rapidly depleting due to retirements, combined with a lack of younger people entering the trade, has also created a significant challenge for the entire industry.

A key contributor to the shortage of new entrants is the need for lineman schools, particularly in the western United States. BTI and OTEC have joined forces to create a comprehensive lineman training program to ease this trend. OTEC will assist with land procurement, along with facility and site improvements; and BTI will operate the school moving forward.

The job of an electric lineworker is varied and complex. The traditional path to becoming a lineman starts with attending a line school before joining an electric utility as an apprentice for four years, or joining a construction company building and repairing electrical infrastructure. The line school builds the core skills needed to enter the field, where learning alongside journeymen linemen will continue for years. "Our goal is to provide training of the highest standards," states BTI President Doug Dalton. "We want to build a reputation for graduating future linemen with a solid foundation of skills, experience, and integrity that will ensure continued success and safety in the industry."

The program will consist of 15 intense weeks of hands-on training, with students working in an indoor lab, a high-tech classroom, and an outdoor training area. Students will receive certifications in pole climbing and pole-top rescue, aerial lift rescue, overhead and underground construction, distribution system design and operation, national electric safety code, electrical theory, rigging, OSHA-10, and more, preparing them to work in the utility environment with the scenarios and safety standards they may encounter in the industry.

Students can also obtain their commercial driver's license (CDL) on campus before starting line school. A CDL is required for most lineworker positions. "Elevating our training to a level that becomes best practice in the industry will be built on several factors. Having the best instructors in the field, small class sizes, state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, and comprehensive course options will be the difference maker," added Dalton. "When providing our students with diverse opportunities, we intend to add on courses like heavy equipment operation and advanced emergency medical training, as examples. To make this school unlike any other, we have a unique opportunity to combine what we have offered at BTI for over a decade with the line curriculum to give these students an elite learning experience."

OTEC and BTI have collaborated for several years on other projects, such as providing student scholarships for trade schools and designing and launching a BTI utility safety training division that now provides utility workers with safety and technical training, along with organizational and employee development courses, across the Pacific Northwest.

"There is a growing need for the technical and skilled labor necessary to support rebuilding and future expansion of the nation's electrical infrastructure," Les Penning, Chief Executive Officer of OTEC, states. "BTI has proven performance in leveraging technology for innovative training in the trades, producing highly skilled workers. This school is in direct alignment with our cooperative and other utility future needs and provides a great gateway for those living in the region, as well as an economic stimulus for our communities."

"Our entire team is honored to be part of such an amazing project," states Julie Huntington, BTI Board Member. "This program exemplifies what can be accomplished with an innovative approach to collaboration between community-based agencies. Programs like this can build a much-needed pipeline of skilled workers for employers who desperately need them, strengthen our local economy, and give people who live in our region a quality local option for training."

About BTI

Baker Technical Institute (BTI) is a leading provider of Career Technical Education programs focused on developing the next generation of skilled workers, technology innovators, entrepreneurs, and community leaders. Headquartered in Baker City, Oregon, BTI offers cutting-edge education and training with a focus on the skilled trades in several growing industry sectors such as general construction, heavy equipment operation, heavy highway construction, electrician apprenticeship, truck driving, welding, computer science, agricultural sciences, engineering, health services, and manufacturing. For more information, go to bakerti.org

About OTEC

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) is one of Oregon's largest distribution cooperatives. Headquartered in Baker City, Oregon, with district offices in La Grande, John Day, and Burns, OTEC serves approximately 31,000 meters in Baker, Grant, Harney, and Union counties with a network of overhead and underground lines approximately 3,000 miles long. OTEC's distribution system represents an investment of more than $153 million.