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## Travelling power engineering lab begins journey

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*Students of Prairie South School division learn Power Engineering in the SaskPower Power Engineering travelling lab. The lab has made it's first stop at Central Collegiate in Moose Jaw. It is the first of its kind in Canada and will be making stops around southern Saskatchewan to help students complete their steam time close to home.*

Photo courtesy Jeff Bouton, Principal of Prairie South Virtual School.

**SaskPower, Prairie South School Division, and the Technical Safety Authority of Saskatchewan (TSASK) have partnered together to build a power engineering lab trailer, perhaps the first of its kind in the country.**

Jeff Boulton is principal and teacher for Prairie South Virtual School. Students enrolled in Power Engineering 20 and 30 will receive their fifth class certificate in the trade upon completion. Boulton said one of the major barriers for high school students in completing the courses is the limited access to a laboratory to complete the hands-on portion of their learning.

“We did a pilot with power engineering last year, we had students from Assiniboia, Coronach and Rockglen. We opened that up to each school division this year, and we talked about the difficulties with travel and various solutions.”

Students are to complete 100 hours of education in two parts. The first is theory, conducted online. The second half is laboratory time, which Boulton said is now much easier thanks to the travelling lab.

He also said it's a great way for students who might be interested in power engineering to give it a try as well as gain some exposure to other similar areas of work.

“Students can make career decisions and decide if this is something they want to do and pursue. If they decide not to continue as a power engineer, they get exposed to testing water, to our welders and millwrights.”

SaskPower is currently seeing a shortage of power engineering employees, which is why the travelling lab was created.

“In the industry of power engineering right now there's a shortage of primarily class one and two engineers. You have to have a specific amount of class two engineers on the floor at all time. There's a shortage because they're retiring not only from SaskPower but from other plants and operations around the province.”

Boulton said the opportunities in the field are highly lucrative.

“A third class power engineer at SaskPower would start somewhere around \$60,000 a year. So you could be 19 and start there, and that's including all benefits. It's shift work, so typically you'd work 15 days a month and have time off in between, of course overtime is always available.

As you gain experience, a class two makes about \$120,000 per year, plus overtime, and then it goes up from there.”

There are currently six students from the Moose Jaw area using the lab to enhance their education. Right now, the lab is only available for students in the Prairie South School division, but Boulton said that hopefully that will change by next year.

“Next year we're looking at including other school divisions and figuring out how that's going to work.”

He said experience on pumps, boilers, valves, piping, and mathematic aptitude with

pressure, volume, and temperature would be an asset, but not at all a requirement for success.

“We do have students that have had experience working on the farm, or they’ve seen it through other ways, but we’ve also had students with no background, just an interest and they’ve like it. They’ve gone on and graduated and now they’re post secondary.

The jobs are out there and this gives the students an opportunity to choose.”

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