



SUCCESS STORY

A safety consultant from South Central College's Center for Business Industry gives a demonstration of the first mobile trailer ever developed for trenching and excavation safety and rescue training.

Community College Program Advances Worker Safety and Confidence

Workforce Training Across State

With National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) funding, thousands of employees of private companies and municipalities across Minnesota and nearby states annually receive health and safety training from South Central College. The community and technical college has campuses in Faribault and North Mankato, Minnesota, and receives funding as part of the Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training (CCCHST), a grantee of the NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP).

Nearly 20 years ago, South Central College's Center for Business and Industry (CBI) developed a trailer unit designed to provide mobile confined space training – the first of its kind in the U.S. Today, three custom-made traveling trailers allow CBI instructors to provide Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency

Response (HAZWOPER), trenching rescue, and confined space training to business and industry. NIEHS funding supported CBI health and safety training to approximately 15,000 individuals in 2019.

Meeting State and Local Training Needs

CBI has four certified safety professionals who have more than 45 years of combined experience teaching NIEHS-funded hazardous materials training courses. "I enjoy the occupational diversity of my classroom, and the freedom and flexibility to design and deliver solutions for a variety of businesses in the health and safety realm," said Robert Weston, a CCCHST workplace safety consultant who has been with South Central College for 15 years. "In the same week, I'll be giving safety training to pallet manufacturers, pet food companies, scaffolding workers, and firefighters."

NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP)

The NIEHS WTP grantees provide health and safety training for workers who are or can be exposed to hazardous materials and waste as part of their jobs or during emergency response. The program was authorized by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (42 USC 9660a).

"Being able to teach at a company or municipal department's location allows workers to train on site, so they can become comfortable and familiar with the actual equipment they will be using on the job."

—Jeff McCabe, Director,
South Central College's Center
for Business and Industry

“The hands-on component and active learning that the trailer trainings allow is invaluable,” said John Pippert, corporate risk manager for Rachel Contracting Inc., a construction company in rural St. Michael. “You don’t know what you should do in a confined space (with restricted means for entry and exit) until you’re actually strapped into a harness and lowered into a manhole. The mobile trailer provides a realistic environment to conduct the confined space entry training.”

Pippert has been using CBI to provide safety training for 20 years. He explained that the training has benefitted his workers by allowing them to be confident when going into a confined space and knowing the right questions to ask. “Because of the training, we made a lot of improvements to our confined space procedures,” said Pippert.

South Central College instructors conduct a confined space training using the mobile trailer for construction workers at Rachel Contracting Inc. in St. Michael, Minnesota.

Photo courtesy of Rachel Contracting Inc.



Mobile Training Adapted to Worksite

South Central College’s innovative trailers have allowed its instructors to travel and deliver training in more than 10 states, including Kentucky, North Dakota, South Dakota, Missouri, and Iowa. Mobile trainings are primarily delivered to workers at construction companies, fire departments, and municipal government public works departments. The trailer-simulated exercises train about six workers, on average, from each company. By using the trailers, instructors can reach workers in rural areas who otherwise might not be able to travel to the college’s campuses. Many companies opt to repeat the mobile training as refresher courses.

Being able to reach workers where they are also gives instructors the opportunity to provide site-specific information, tailoring the training to specific hazards and conditions of workers’ assigned duties. “My company has about 800 employees,” said Bruce Guiliani, a corporate industrial hygienist for The Heritage Group. “With hazardous materials work, you cannot make a mistake.”

Learning Network to Share Resources

CCCHST serves as an academic learning network for sharing instructional resources, curriculum, and the latest incident response tools to further develop community and professional advancement. “I have 20 years of hazardous materials training, but I still learn new things from CCCHST and PETE programs,” shared Jarod Kruse, an emergency response instructor at Hennepin Technical College in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. “I choose to take PETE’s safety training refresher courses through CCCHST because CCCHST has built up a trusted network of well-seasoned, competent, and experienced trainers.”

Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training (CCCHST)/National Partnership for Environmental Technology Education (PETE)

CCCHST is sponsored by PETE in partnership with the Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute (HMTRI). PETE provides customized training and continuing education to workers who may be exposed to hazardous materials and waste as part of their jobs or during an emergency response. CCCHST includes more than 100 community colleges and training partners that use PETE curriculum to train workers and first responders in their local areas. From August 1, 2015 to May 1, 2019, NIEHS-funded CCCHST instructors have provided more than one million contact hours of hazardous materials training to 183,885 students and workers across 35 states.

Courses provided by South Central College through PETE/CCCHST:

- 6-hour Hazardous Materials for Transport
- 8-hour Trench & Excavation Safety and Rescue
- 10-hour Construction Safety
- 24-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER)
- 4-hour Confined Space Safety and Rescue