



Florida Department of Transportation Research

Entry-level Transportation Construction Workforce Shortages

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The transportation construction industry nationwide is expected to have sustained growth through 2012, providing as many as one million hourly jobs, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. However, the industry is having difficulty recruiting new employees, despite the fact that construction workers receive on average higher wages than hourly workers in other fields. Recent high school graduates and women are particularly reluctant to apply for construction jobs. The low numbers of entry-level workers, combined with the impending retirement of a large number of experienced employees, threatens to create a labor shortage in transportation construction.



High school students can participate in equipment labs during FDOT Construction Career Days events.

To identify the causes for the applicant shortfall, researchers surveyed women and recent high school graduates. The surveys asked respondents to identify factors they consider important to job selection and how they perceive construction work as a job choice. The researchers also surveyed construction companies in Florida about their hiring challenges and practices.

According to the study, young job seekers and job candidates want occupations that fit their personal interests; that offer flexibility and autonomy, good wages, chances for training and advancement, and fair treatment; and that have a positive public image. They considered construction work unattractive because of its physical demands, lack of flexible hours and work assignments, and poor public image. They were not aware of training, education, and advancement opportunities in the field. Also, the fact that the number of female workers currently employed in transportation construction is low is

discouraging young women from seeking to enter the industry.

The construction companies surveyed agreed that the difficult working conditions, poor image, and lack of information about job potential, including wages, hinder recruitment. They also indicated that there is a widespread lack of technical education in the applicant pool. Based on the results of the study, researchers provided a host of recommendations for addressing transportation construction workforce shortages, focusing on branding, recruitment, and outreach techniques.

