



Michael P. Coonley, AICP, Executive Director  
Northpoint Technology Center II  
187 Northpointe Boulevard  
Freeport, PA 16229  
724-548-1500 Phone • 724-545-6055 Fax  
[economicdevelopment@co.armstrong.pa.us](mailto:economicdevelopment@co.armstrong.pa.us)

## *Department of Economic Development* **COUNTY OF ARMSTRONG**

### **For Immediate Release:**

### **Free training opportunity for those affected by the downturn in coal industry and others to fill the workforce gap**

**November 16, 2017**

A new, targeted training program for displaced coal workers and others in the Appalachian region will introduce participants to natural gas utility and pipeline operations careers and enable them to become stronger candidates for jobs.

The pre-employment training program includes four weeks of blended classroom and hands-on training. The program provides a basic understanding and awareness of natural gas, the natural gas utility and pipeline industry, associated equipment, procedures and operations. It will enable students to pursue local employment in the natural gas industry, where pipeline operations crews are in great demand.

There will be two rounds of training, each held in Armstrong County at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) Northpointe Campus located at 167 Northpointe Boulevard, Freeport, PA 16229. The first training begins **November 30, 2017**. The second training begins **January 8, 2018**. Students must be 18 years of age or older with a High School Diploma, GED or post-secondary education. The student must possess a valid driver's license, pass a drug test and background check.

The Natural Gas Utility and Pipeline Field Skills Training Program curriculum was developed by Gas Technology Institute (GTI)—a leading research, development and training organization addressing global energy challenges—with input from natural gas industry partners. Various venues in southwestern Pennsylvania and southeastern Ohio will be used for this program. Regional utilities and their contractors currently have open positions at their companies. Starting salaries can exceed \$50,000 depending on skills, and the career path can lead to six-figure compensation.

Thanks to funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), there are no tuition costs for eligible students in southwestern Pennsylvania and southeastern Ohio. Students must pay for their drug test and background check, with total costs less than \$75.

“Potential candidates include persons who have been affected by the downturn in coal, veterans and others looking for an attractive, well-paying career,” said Michael Coonley, Executive Director of the Armstrong County Department of Economic Development. Jobs are currently available with public utility companies, midstream companies and their contractors. “The last day of the class includes a job fair with potential employers,” said Coonley.

Speaking on behalf of the Armstrong County Board of Commissioners, Commissioner Jason Renshaw added, “This is a tremendous opportunity. This level of training, at no cost to the student, in a field with available, well-paying jobs does not happen every day. I certainly hope our people take advantage of this.”

For questions and enrollment information, please contact:

Patrick Findle  
GTI Program Manager  
412-577-8350  
[patrick.findle@gastechnology.org](mailto:patrick.findle@gastechnology.org)

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Executive Director  
Armstrong County Department of Economic Development  
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