

Construction Worker Shortage Getting Acute

The Brillion News

MADISON – The Wisconsin Builders Association (WBA) said October is Careers in Construction Month each year, but this year, the efforts to recruit people for careers in the construction trades is acute – with contractors hurting for skilled workers such as carpenters, framers and roofers.

The association said that when the bottom fell out of home building with the 2008 recession, many skilled construction trades employees left for new career fields, and never returned. The National Association of Home Builders estimates a nationwide shortfall of 138,000 construction sector employees.

The group recently conducted a survey of home builders, and it showed significant needs for capable workers.

“Six in 10 of those [contractors] surveyed experienced delays in completing projects on time, 18 percent had to turn down some projects, and nine percent lost or cancelled sales because they had too few workers to complete their homes,” said Harvey Kessel, WBA president.

The shortage of workers, Kessel said, is also driving up the cost of home construction in Wisconsin.

A one-year delay can mean a significant increase in the cost of a new home. Former WBA president David Belman of Waukesha said a home he built two years ago would cost \$3,500 more to build today.

“Construction on that home rose seven percent in two years, because finding skilled workers is challenging and we are forced to pay higher rates to keep good employees,” Belman said.

The WHA said the average wage for construction workers in Wisconsin is \$54,000 per year. Top plumbers make around \$80,000 per year.

The average construction worker in Wisconsin is 39 years of age, while the average home builder is 59.

~ Sources: WBA and NAHB