Data center development fuels soaring demand for skilled construction workers

Recruiting rises for electricians, plumbers, HVAC installers, Avison Young says

By Lou Hirsh
CoStar News
June 30, 2026 | 2:02 P.M.

A nationwide surge in data center development is driving a significant increase in demand for workers with the skills needed to get these facilities up and running, according to a report from Avison Young.

The real estate services firm said U.S. data center development in established and emerging markets is fueling strong demand for electricians, plumbers, telecom line workers and installers of heating and cooling systems, among other positions.

Employment in those occupations rose 22.1% on average across the top 10 U.S. data center markets between 2020 and 2025, based on facilities built or in development. Reno, Nevada, posted the fastest growth over the past five years at 48%, followed by Austin, Texas, at 40% and Phoenix, Arizona, at 33%.

The largest skilled labor pools are now found in the most well-established regions based on project volume and planned computing power capacity. They include Northern Virginia, with projects with a capacity of 6,485 megawatts; Dallas, with projects totaling 3,704 megawatts; and Atlanta, with a project capacity of 3,257 megawatts.

A single megawatt is enough to power about 750 to 1,000 homes continuously, according to electric industry data. The largest data center campuses are increasingly being planned to accommodate capacities at more than a gigawatt, or 1,000 megawatts.

“Securing skilled labor at scale has become a critical challenge over the past two years as more gigawatt-style campuses break ground,” Zachary Cutler, Avison Young’s U.S. data center lead for market intelligence, said in the report. “With each project often requiring thousands of workers, developers in labor-constrained markets are increasingly recruiting skilled tradespeople from across the country to keep construction timelines on track.”

The need for skilled data center workers has prompted technology firms, developers and other real estate professionals to devise ways to ramp up education and training.

To that end, real estate services provider CBRE and Facebook parent Meta have teamed up to create multiple training centers to teach thousands of technicians skilled trades to build and maintain the latest data centers. The first two sites are set to open this summer near airports in Ohio and Indiana, CBRE officials told CoStar News.