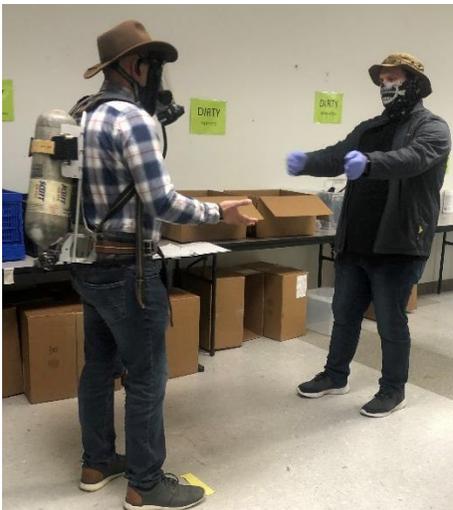


## HAMMER Training Restarts After COVID-19 Shutdown

On May 28, 2020, the HAMMER Federal Training Center located on the Hanford Site in Richland, Washington successfully reopened its doors and restarted instructor-led, hands-on training for the workforce. Training had been put on hold in March when the Department of Energy closed the site to all but essential mission-critical operations personnel due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In April, as Hanford and the country started looking forward to reopening, HAMMER recognized that if Hanford was to reopen, it would be critical to restart training for the workforce. HAMMER staff, together with the Training Directors from the Hanford Atomic Metal Trades Council (HAMTC) and Central Washington Building and Construction Trades Council (CWB&CTC), worked collaboratively to develop a HAMMER *COVID-19 Exposure Control, Mitigation and Recovery Plan*. This plan compiles requirements for COVID-19 exposure control, mitigation and recovery at HAMMER and meets Washington State Phase 1 Requirements as well as those from the Department of Energy (DOE) for resuming training services and operations.



Respiratory Protection Training with COVID-19 safety precautions

Planning for HAMMER's restart with the shifting COVID-19 landscape required the establishment of new processes including safety procedures and training methods. The HAMMER Worker Trainers, members of HAMTC or CWB&CTC who teach part time, would be key to the successful reopening of training starting with Respiratory Protection, HAZWOPER, and Beryllium courses.

COVID-19 safety and health considerations and ways to mitigate the hazards were a huge challenge. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, together with OSHA, Washington State, and Hanford Site guidance were constantly modified as the pandemic progressed. There were many who doubted a safe reopening of HAMMER would be possible. Many of the Worker Trainers stepped forward and accepted the challenge to reopen and teach classes. Some were not able to participate due to concerns for family and

personal health.

Hanford workers face many hazards in their daily work including chemical, radiological, heat/cold stress, just to name a few. They understand what needs to be done to mitigate hazards both in general and specifically. COVID-19 hazards would require a deeper look at all activities involved in training and working at HAMMER in order to keep personnel safe. The Worker Trainers stepped up and took ownership of what would need to be done to reopen their classes.

“Respiratory Protection training Worker Trainers reviewed how many workers handled used masks and had the potential for contamination. This led to identification of a water soluble bag to contain used masks so the next person would not handle potentially contaminated equipment.”

Steve Maki, Training Director  
CWB&CTC



HAZWOPER training at HAMMER in the updated Tactical Maze Building

A thorough hazard analysis of COVID-19 potential transmissions required modifications and changes across all training activities. Alternative on-campus venues for classes were identified to support incorporation of social distancing requirements. For example, hazardous waste training was moved into larger room locations. What were the touch points that could be mitigated? Something as simple as not having students sign a roster but having a Worker Trainer verify students were in attendance removed a touch-point problem. Other considerations included disinfecting processes and what personal protective

equipment would be needed. HAMMER, working closely with the Worker Trainers, took a thorough approach. Students then were taking this approach to the field and asking questions about the actions for safety at their workplaces.

Difficult problems such as additional sanitization of respiratory protection equipment and how to do hands-on training activities were tackled by the Worker Trainers. Curriculums had to be modified and hands-on activities adjusted, keeping in mind that students need to be actively engaged in their learning. Collaborating with HAMMER Program Managers and Instructional Designers, Worker Trainers re-wrote lesson plans, performed dry-runs of the modified curriculums and continued to make additional improvements and adjustments to handle COVID-19 requirements. They researched and compiled documentation so when

students raised a COVID-19 concern, information from experts was readily available. This helped instill confidence in the Worker Trainers that the paths they were following were the right ones. When students were finally in classes and those questions arose, the confidence of the Worker Trainers and defense-in-depth documentation helped to alleviate concerns and increase the confidence of students that their safety and health were paramount.

“Even in the time of COVID-19, HAMMER managed to make the training engaging and easy to follow. Thanks!”

Respiratory Protection  
Student

“I am pleasantly surprised. You knocked it out of the park!”

Respiratory Protection  
Student

“Worker Trainers are models for safety at the Hanford Site in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. What we do for safety at HAMMER sets the bar and translates into daily life at work, home and in the community. Focusing on safety becomes a lifestyle shared with others.”

Steve Maiuri, Training Director  
HAMTC



As training continues to reopen with more classes, opportunities for improvement of safety processes and procedures will continue. Failure to keep students and instructors safe is not an option for the HAMMER team. HAMTC and CWB&CTC Training Directors together with HAMMER management continue to support the Worker Trainers by holding the line and not allowing production to supersede safety.



“In spite of numerous concerns about our ability to safely restart training, I was confident the Worker Trainers and HAMMER staff would be successful.”

Paul Vandervert, Director  
HAMMER Federal Training Center

“The Worker Trainers have always been essential to the Hanford mission and they will continue to be mission critical during and after this pandemic.”

Eric Dean, General President  
International Association of Bridge, Structural,  
Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers  
HAMMER Steering Committee Chairman



“HAMMER is truly the best practice in safety and health training and a national resource.”

James V. (Jimmy Hart), President  
Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO

By July 31, HAMMER surpassed 5,000 students trained since reopening on May 28. This will help ensure workers are current in their training when Hanford fully reopens. Given the constraints, concerns, planning, overhaul, and execution necessary to move forward, this is a remarkable achievement. Every part of the HAMMER organization combined with the Worker Trainers has ensured HAMMER’s success.