

[Vision for world-class tunnel training developing at Satsop](#)

Local News

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Posted on : September 27, 2010 at 7:11 am

SATSOP, Wash. - If someone told Mike Warren that he has tunnel vision it wouldn't offend him a bit. But it would be more accurate to say that it's a vision for tunnels or rather building a world-class tunnel training program that Warren, the training director of the Northwest Laborers-Employers Training Trust, is realizing at Satsop Development Park. "The Puget Sound area is beginning to get the nickname in the tunnel industry as the Silicon Valley of tunnels because of all the work that is coming up here. Also, three of the world's biggest tunnel manufacturing companies are right here," said Warren. The first tunnel class this fall to be taught at Satsop — SHAFT (Safety & Hazard Awareness for Tunnels) — will begin Oct. 4. It's a one-week, 40-hour course. Students do not have to be part of the Laborers Union to attend, but they do need to be in the Laborers Union to do tunnel work, Warren explained.

With all the tunnels — including the next phase of the Sound Transit project to the University District and the Alaskan Way Viaduct project in downtown Seattle and more projects coming in the years ahead — skilled tunnel workers are needed, he explained. "And when we get done putting together our different training modules at Satsop, we will offer the only hands-on training of its kind in North America," he said. He noted that there's excellent training at the Colorado School of Mines and in West Virginia, but that the training to be developed at Satsop will be more hands-on and concentrate on tunnels instead of mine work. "We already have people in California, the Midwest and the East Coast interested in attending the program," said Warren who helped establish Satsop as one of the NW Laborers Training sites in 2007. The organization also has training centers in Kingston, Spokane, Pasco and West Jordan, Utah. "At Satsop, we've already taught mason tending, scaffolding building, concrete classes, railroad installation, grade checking, transit and level, elevation control, asphalt workers class and forklift operation and certification," Warren said. In addition to people who want to work in tunnels, various regulatory agencies have shown interest in having their people, who would have occasion to go into tunnels as part of their work, attend the SHAFT course, Warren said. Satsop Development Park was chosen for this new tunnel training center because it offered space that was becoming tight at the NW Laborers Training facility in Kingston. In addition, originally organizers thought they could use the extensive tunnel network built beneath the planned nuclear power plants that were never completed, Warren said. While hopes are still high that some of those pre-existing 12-foot tunnels can be used for training as the center develops, some significant work would need to be done first to ensure safety, Warren said. "We're not going underground yet," he said, adding that instead they are working on a simulated tunnel and using a local merchant to supply the 1,800 pieces of specialty wood needed for the students to build it. In addition, Warren said the tunnel industry has generously donated many key pieces of equipment. The Obayashi Corporation donated 300 feet of railroad track. Frank Coluccio Construction Co. donated a hyperbaric transfer station and the Vinci, Parsons Frontier-Kemper Joint Venture donated a huge tunnel boring machine — TBM — all so that students can have a true hands-on experience. Even King County donated 100 feet of leftover concrete tunnel segments that would have cost them money to destroy, but are a great asset to the training

program, Warren said. "These are big, big donations to help us put together a top-notch training program," Warren said, noting that the value of the TBM for scrap metal alone is about \$130,000. After the NW Laborers Training facility at Satsop offers the SHAFT class, it plans to offer a class on light rail and maintenance, tunnel rescue training and hyperbaric work, Warren said. In an interesting twist, the tunnel instructor, Stan Simons, 50, who has been underground around the world, began his career at Satsop in 1978 doing dirt work for both cooling towers, both reactor buildings, and the turbine building. Now, the 6-foot 5-inch Simons says he's eager to be teaching this new course and working hard to develop other related tunnel courses at Satsop. "We love this partnership with the NW Laborers Training and we're particularly excited about the new tunnel training courses," said Tami Garrow, CEO of Satsop Development Park. "The building trades are a huge part of our regional economy and we're so glad the Park's space, super-sized infrastructure, classrooms and outdoor training facilities so perfectly suit these kinds of job-training opportunities." "What a great way to match tomorrow's workforce with those high-wage, high-demand job-training opportunities," she said. For more information about the tunnel classes go to www.nwlett.org. . *Satsop Development Park is a 1,700-acre mixed-use business and technology park located in scenic Grays Harbor County in Southwest Washington just 30 minutes from Olympia and the I-5 corridor. It is home to more than 30 businesses, offers 440 acres of developed, pad-ready land and buildings supported by super-sized infrastructure and surrounded by 1,200 acres of sustainable managed forestland. The Park is managed by the Grays Harbor Public Development Authority, a public corporation whose mission is to create new jobs and investment for the region. More information on Satsop Development Park can be found at www.Satsop.com.*