

# CAREER PATHS: ELECTRICIAN or LOW VOLTAGE TECHNICIAN



**What does an Electrician do?** Electricians install, connect, test, and maintain electrical systems for a variety of purposes including power, lighting, climate control, security, communications, and electronic controls for machinery. Electricians work with blueprints and digital construction platforms, follow the National Electrical Code (NEC), and must comply with state and local building requirements. They increasingly work with innovations in smart and green technologies. Although most electricians specialize in either construction or maintenance, a growing number do both. Their working environment varies, depending on the type of job; to avoid injuries, they follow strict safety procedures.



**What does a Low Voltage Technician do?** Low Voltage Technicians test, service, and maintain low voltage electronic and control systems equipment. Technicians are often divided into two categories: Voice Data Video technicians (or VDV techs), and Fire Life Safety (FLS) technicians, who work on proprietary systems related to fire, life and safety.

Electricians and Low Voltage Technicians today are at the forefront of emerging technologies that require their skilled knowledge to plan and install solar electric systems, electric car charging stations, smart buildings and homes, and consult about energy efficiency. They work on commercial construction, public projects, and in residential settings and find themselves in many working conditions.

**Many Electricians or Low Voltage Technicians work for electrical contractors or own electrical contracting businesses themselves. The median wage in 2020 for Electricians in California was \$66,548 annually, or \$32 hourly. Electricians in competitive markets such as the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, San Diego, and other in-demand or metro areas may command over double that hourly rate. Recent WECA graduates report making \$72/hour. The median wage in 2020 for Electricians in Arizona was \$50,270 per year, or \$24.17 hourly. The median wage in 2020 for Low Voltage Technicians/ Security and Fire Alarm Installers in California was \$53,555 annually, or \$25.75 hourly.**

## Career Advising Resources

Contact us at 877-444-9322

Visit us online at [www.goweca.com/careers/advisors.aspx](http://www.goweca.com/careers/advisors.aspx) for more information about the electrician career path and how to advise.

Visit a WECA training facility. See our labs and classrooms, talk to an instructor. Our education team will be happy to show you around.

Do you have a career fair coming up? Our outreach team can visit and explain the benefits of an electrician career and the training paths WECA has to offer.

Sources: California Employment Development Department Labor Market Info; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2020 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates; WECA graduate interviews

**Why Consider the Electrician or Low Voltage Technician Career Path?** The electrician or low voltage technician career path can be a successful and rewarding choice. Career training is affordable --or completely sponsored--and should not require taking on student debt. For those who enjoy working with both their heads and their hands, prefer new environments to going into an office, and have good spatial abilities, it could be a great fit.



Careers in the trades: A career as an electrician or low voltage technician is a respected and needed profession in our modern and increasingly connected world. Many in the skilled trades are retiring, and demand is high for a new generation of highly skilled and trained women and men to replace them.

Electricians and Low Voltage Technicians make good salaries for their skilled training and experience. Many work for contractors and others own contracting businesses themselves. They in turn provide employment and on-the-job training for employees and apprentices. Electricians and low voltage technicians play an important role in building their communities.

While these skilled professions may not be for everyone, advising the electrician or low voltage technician path to the right person can be a good option compared to other careers or traditional four-year degrees.

#### **How Does Someone Become a Skilled Electrician?**

Those interested in pursuing the electrician career path must complete an electrician trainee program, or have entered and completed a formal apprenticeship program. In addition, they are then required to take the CA State electrician certification exam as required by law.

**How Long Does it Take?** Depending on the education path a person takes, as an electrician trainee or apprentice, and the type of electrician work they want to specialize in--a WECA student can graduate in 3-5 years.

**How Much Does it Cost?** WECA's electrician education programs are affordable. For example, tuition for WECA's apprenticeship programs are paid by the apprentice's employer. WECA's electrician trainee tuition is approximately \$1,513 per year--comparable to a year's tuition and fees at a California or Arizona community college. Compare that to an average of \$3,330 to \$14,100 per semester for in-state tuition in California, \$11,338 to \$12,716 per year for in-state tuition in Arizona, or an average of \$19,766 to \$38,949 per year for out-of-state tuition in both California and Arizona. *Sources: California State University,*

*University of California, Arizona State University, University of Arizona, College Tuition Compare*

**What is WECA?** Western Electrical Contractor's Association, Inc., is a statewide nonprofit organization serving merit shop electrical contractors, their employees and the industry. WECA offers federal and state-approved electrician education apprenticeship and training programs. Visit [www.goweca.com](http://www.goweca.com).

#### **WECA Electrician Education Programs**

**Electrician Trainee Program** WECA's Electrician Trainee Program offers an electrician education focused on a blended learning system that's flexible, convenient, and effective. Courses are taken online over instructor-led live webcasts in the evenings, allowing students to conveniently participate after work without having to travel. Students typically attend one onsite, hands-on lab day per course at one of WECA's modern training facilities. All classes are exclusively taught by experienced electrical industry professionals. Electrician Trainees can complete their coursework program in four years, while independently gaining the on-the job hours necessary to sit for the certification exam.

**Apprenticeship Programs** Apprenticeship is a system of learning in the classroom and receiving on-the-job training while earning wages. WECA's apprentices attend classes in an accelerated and intensive format consisting of full-time classroom and lab instruction for two consecutive weeks every six to seven months. Each two week session is equal to one semester.

An apprentice's tuition is paid for by a WECA member contractor whom they are working for as an apprentice. WECA offers three apprenticeship programs: Commercial Inside Wireman, Residential Wireman, and Low Voltage (Voice-Data-Video and Fire-Life Safety, Sound and Communications Systems) Installer.



**WECA Northern California Training Facility (pictured). WECA also has California Training Facilities in Riverside, San Diego, and Fresno, CA. WECA also has a Training Facility in Phoenix, AZ.**