



**MINNESOTA STATE**  
Career and Technical Education

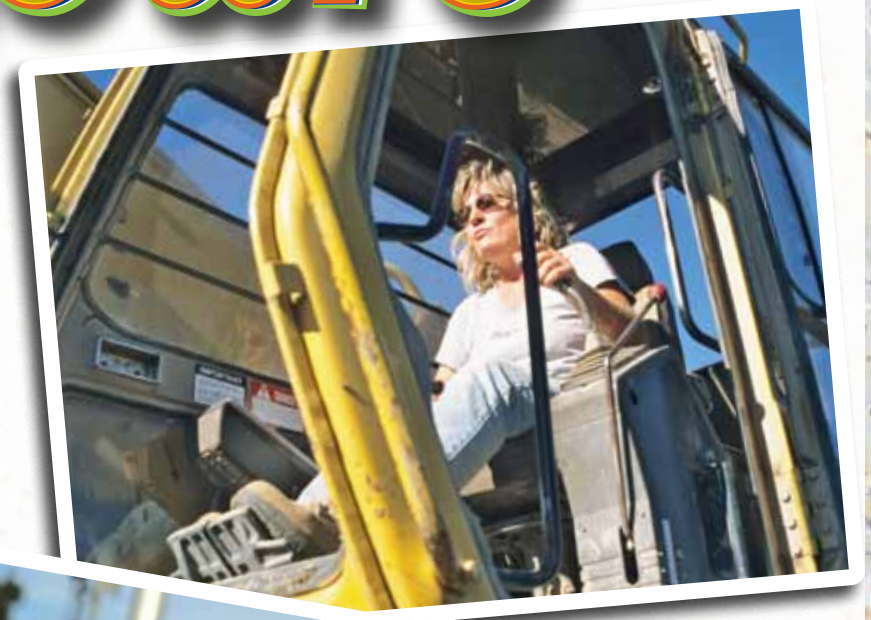


# A Good Career Fit: Seeing Other Possibilities

**Jocelyn Riley, President, Her Own Words® Women in Nontraditional Careers**

**2025 CTE Month**  
*February 20, 2025*

# 92,000 Hours





You spend so much of your life at work. You spend more time at work than you do with your family at home. I do, anyway.

If you don't find something that you like to do, you're going to be miserable.

**WATER UTILITY WORKER**



I worked in a clothes store part time way back. I thought that was the most boringist. You stand there, you fold clothes, "Can I help you?" I mean, that's just not me.

**WELDER**



A big lightbulb  
went off, you know,  
not knowing that  
women could  
actually do this.

**OWNER-TOOL COMPANY**

I chose a career  
based on my  
personal preferences  
and talents



**PAINTER**



I wanted a job that was somewhat more physical because I'm a physical person.

**FIRE LIEUTENANT/PARAMEDIC**



I like working  
with my hands.

**MACHINIST**





I worked for a lighting company assembling light fixtures. The assembly line is kind of like everyday repetitious work.

**MACHINIST**



I never found an office job or a profession in an office that felt more than doing dishes.

**POLICE OFFICER**

I have a degree in preschool kindergarten education, teaching degree, and I was working at a local daycare center. But that's a minimum-wage job and I had loans from college and so on and I couldn't pay them off and work there.



**FIRE LIEUTENANT/PARAMEDIC**

**I was a certified nursing assistant before I became a machinist.**



**MACHINIST**



You get to look at something and say, I did that and it works and it's going to be there for a while, and it's real satisfying.

**ELECTRICIAN**



You're designing something on paper and then you get to see it built. And that's really neat to go out and actually see something that you've designed. That's the most rewarding thing for me.

**ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEER**

Just the feeling of flicking a light switch, when you hung all those lights, and you ran all the wires for them.

Or anything like that in the trades. It's just how substantial that is.



**ELECTRICIAN**



No matter what career you choose, it's still always a matter of your being disciplined and dedicated to what you're doing or trying to accomplish a goal.

**ELECTRICAL ENGINEER**



What attracted me to this field was the precision, the detail, measuring things. I've always liked that. And I have that perfection streak in me.



**MACHINE TOOL INSTRUCTOR**



It's really important  
that you be happy in  
what you're doing.

**FIREFIGHTER**



You could be very efficient at doing the responsibilities of a certain job—but it just doesn't have the challenge and the satisfaction of seeing something happen.

**NEIGHBORHOOD POLICE OFFICER**

I met a volunteer firefighter woman on my softball team and I looked at her and I thought, I can do that. Because I was in really good shape and I thought if she can do it, I can do it.



**FIREFIGHTER**



I came into this field totally cold. I did not know anything and I was not particularly mechanically inclined.

**MACHINE TOOL INSTRUCTOR**



I do less heavy lifting  
now than I did as a  
waitress

**ELECTRICIAN**

Obviously, you don't go into anything, whether it's a career teaching or coaching, knowing everything. You have to be willing to learn along the way.



**COACH**



I can do everything in the shop any man can do.

**WELDER**



When I'm doing the welding it's like I'm at peace, you know, I've got a lot of peace because nobody's behind me. Nobody's looking over your shoulder, watching your every move and you kind of relax.



**WELDER**

I aggressively sought out places. I tested somewhere every weekend. I put myself through the academy.



**FIREFIGHTER**



It's so important for women to really think about what makes them happy and what they would like to do and how they can do it.

**HIGHWAY OPERATING ENGINEER**



It was really kind of scary when I decided to make this career change because I was not a young kid coming out of high school. You know, I wasn't eighteen. I was already a mother with five kids.

**FIREFIGHTER**

I was a food-service manager for ten years. I was in charge of sixty people, menus, purchasing food and all that stuff. And the funny thing is, whenever I was sitting in my office, I was always looking out the window.



**HIGHWAY OPERATING ENGINEER**



And nothing ever felt like it was something that fit me and something that I was pigeonholed to do.

**FIREFIGHTER**

In this job you have the ability to see something from start to finish and oftentimes see an improvement on the old way of doing business. So it has more satisfaction.



**NEIGHBORHOOD POLICE OFFICER**

I did quite a few varieties of different types of professions and never quite being satisfied or getting the amount of income that was adequate.



**OWNER-TOOL COMPANY**





Have some guts, jump in there and do things that scare you.

**HELICOPTER PILOT**

I thought it was only going to be like a season or two for me. Just make real good money for a couple of years and go back to what I was doing. But I got to like it.



**CONCRETE FINISHER**

I've always been interested in the medical field, it was my goal.



**PARAMEDIC**



It's long hours, but it's a very, very rewarding and versatile job. If you don't like to be bored, this is the job to have.

**POLICE OFFICER/SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR**

You're not going to be bored out here ever. It's never a boring day. I don't have a boring minute.



**HIGHWAY OPERATING ENGINEER**



Opportunities  
continue to grow  
as you advance in  
your career.

**MECHANICAL ENGINEER**



**Every failure, every  
success, is yours.  
You own it.**

**CAST-IRON ARTIST**



I've always been passionate  
about making my own  
choices

**BUSINESS MANAGER**



There is a lot of creativity



**INDUSTRIAL WELDING INSTRUCTOR**



Every project is different, that's the great thing about being an engineer.

**CIVIL ENGINEER**

Whether you like science,  
math, history or English,  
there is something that fits



**PHYSICIST**

**You can't outsource  
this job**



**HIGHWAY OPERATING ENGINEER**

I can drive down the road and see things I've built



**ENGINEER**



I'm giving  
back to my  
community

**DETECTIVE**



As a machinist you're constantly learning and doing different set-ups, different jobs, using different gauging equipment.

**MACHINIST**



The average woman probably doesn't think she could, but I think with a little bit of training I'm sure she would amaze herself at what she can do.

**CARPENTER**





I really enjoy it;  
every day there's  
something new.

**TEST & DEVELOPMENT ENGINEER**

This is the type of job that has a future. It's good pay, the benefits are usually pretty good.



**POLICE OFFICER/SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR**



I don't want something that will just take care of right now. I want something that I'm not going to get tired of.

**WELDER**



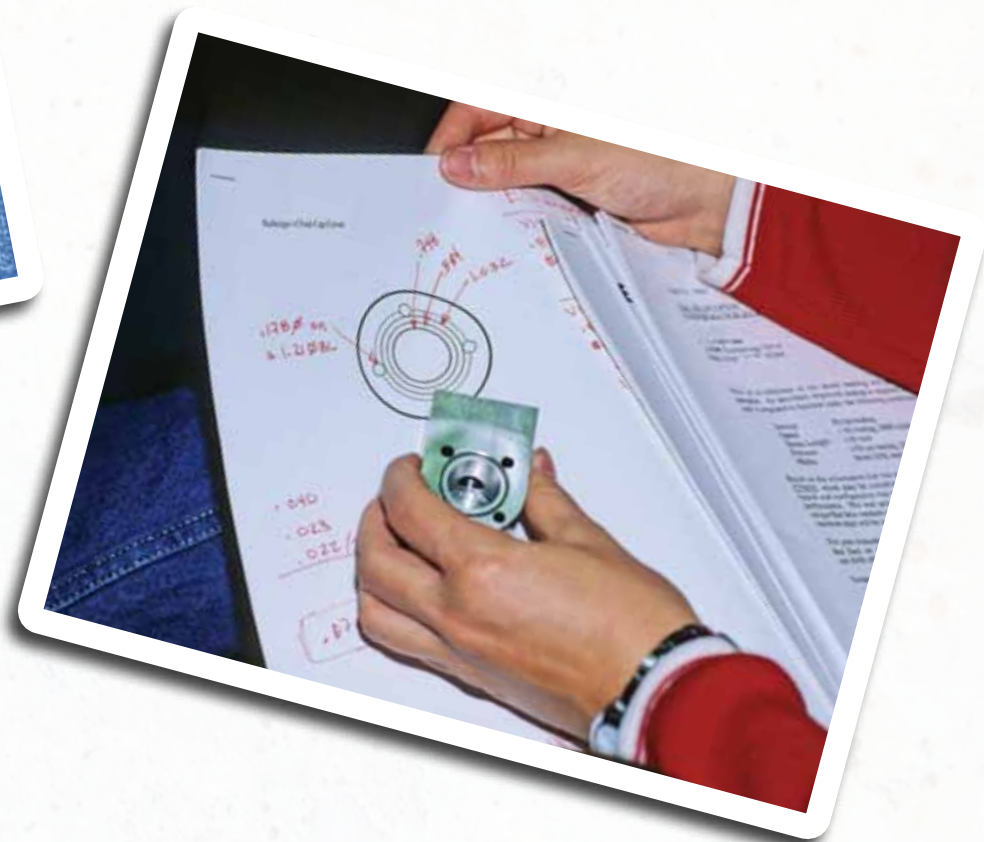
You can do it. It takes hard work. Nothing that's worthwhile is not going to take a little bit of work, but it's possible.

**ORTHODONTIST**

When I decided to make this career change, I came from General Motors and I was quite comfortable. I had been there for thirteen years and I was making a good living.



**FIREFIGHTER**



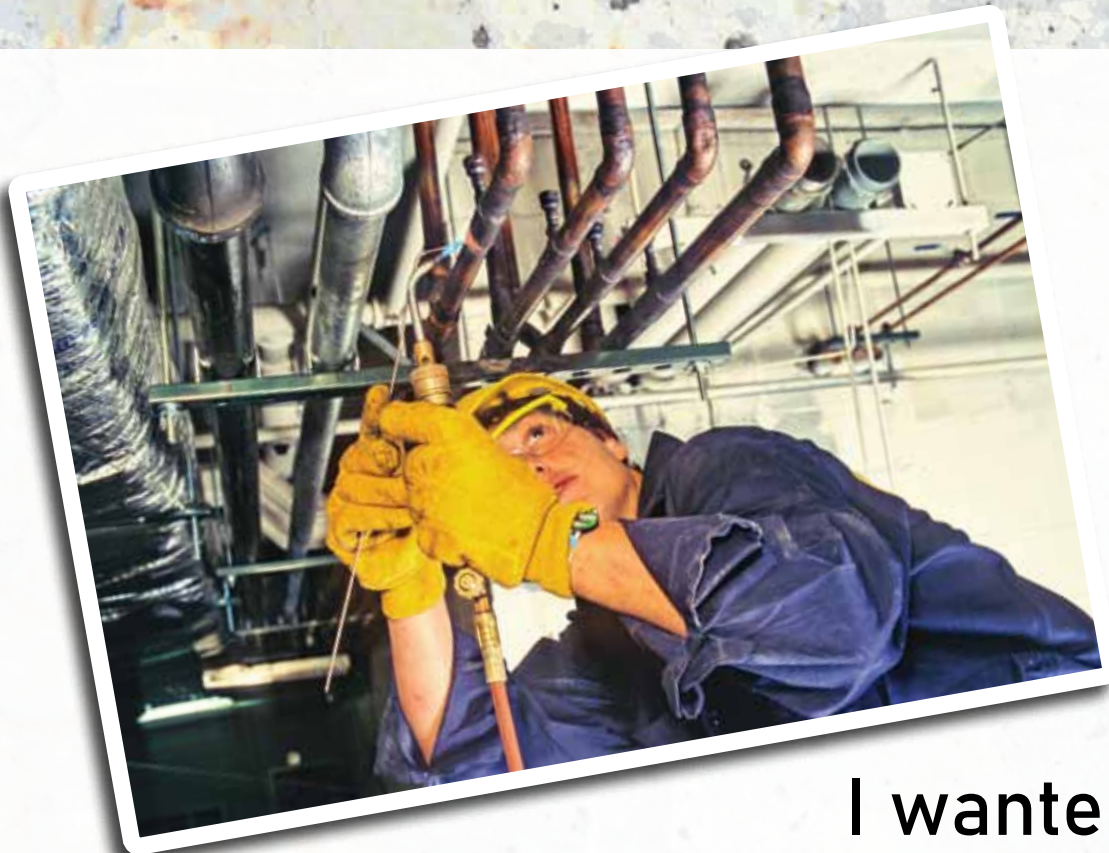
The challenges are what keep this job very interesting.

**HYDROMECHANICAL PRODUCT ENGINEER**

Your base salary is going to be higher generally speaking than it's going to be if you go into any kind of liberal-arts type of field.



**MECHANICAL ENGINEER**



I wanted to be able to travel, have a little extra money. I was doing all right, but I wasn't having as much fun as I wanted to.

**PLUMBER**



I love the skill and I don't mind getting dirty and the heat doesn't bother me at all.



**MACHINIST**



Where this job, sure, you're tired, but you probably have more energy leaving that job than you do sitting on your butt all day or, you know, sitting at a desk. See, I couldn't do that.

**WELDER**

I took a small-engines class and I was the only woman in the class.

I walked in on the first day into this huge garage lab with a tractor and the instructor said, "OK, students, what I'd like you to do for your first assignment is sketch the transmission system."

And all these young gentlemen looked at me like, whoa, I bet she doesn't even know where the transmission system is.



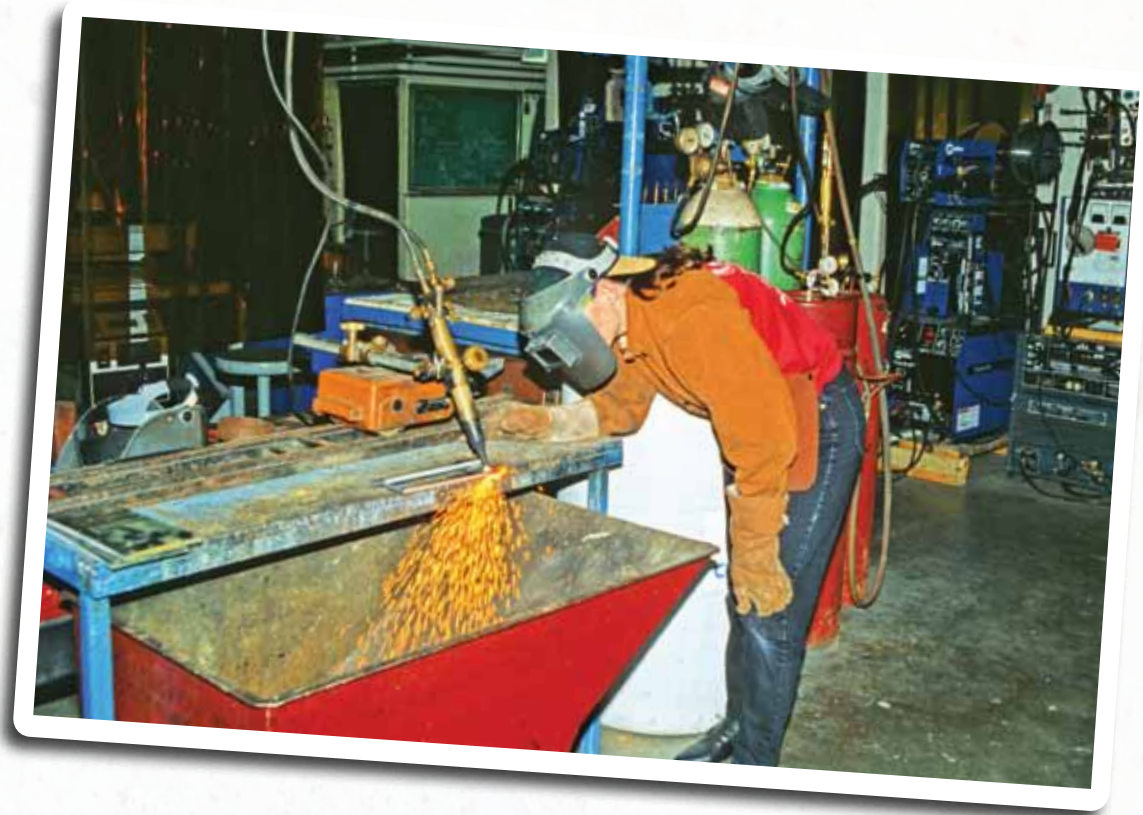
**ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEER**



I think the biggest thing to overcome was lack of self-confidence.

**MOLD-MAKER**

I'm a single mom of four children. I want something that I can take care of my kids—with or without someone.



**WELDER**

It's all about what you want to do and it can be intimidating at times, but just if you stick it out, it really pays off in the end.



**ENGINEER/RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT  
PROCESS SCIENTIST**



It just makes me  
really happy to  
have this job. I  
really love the job.

**FIRE LIEUTENANT/PARAMEDIC**

**We can do it. We just need  
the opportunities and we  
need to take the challenge  
and try it.**



**ARCHITECT**





I saw the inequity between what the women who worked in the office were paid versus what the men who were traveling were paid.

**HIGHWAY TECHNICIAN**



If you're not happy at your job, I don't want to hear it. Change it, you know, or go get another job.

Don't complain to me about it because nobody's going to make it better except you.

**WATER UTILITY WORKER**

I needed to find something that I could look at and say, I can see myself doing this ten, twenty years down the road.



**WELDER**

I don't want to be one of those parents who at fifty or sixty is still sitting at home wondering how I'm going to pay a bill.



**WELDER**



I thought it would  
be a good job,  
good-paying job,  
always in demand.

**WELDER**

I decided it was time to move on and do something else, something more challenging.



**ELECTRICIAN**

You have to keep expanding and learning.



**HELICOPTER PILOT**



**It's a big self-esteem builder.**

**CARPENTER**





The reason I took this opportunity is because of the challenge of the job.

**MACHINIST**

I use my problem-solving abilities



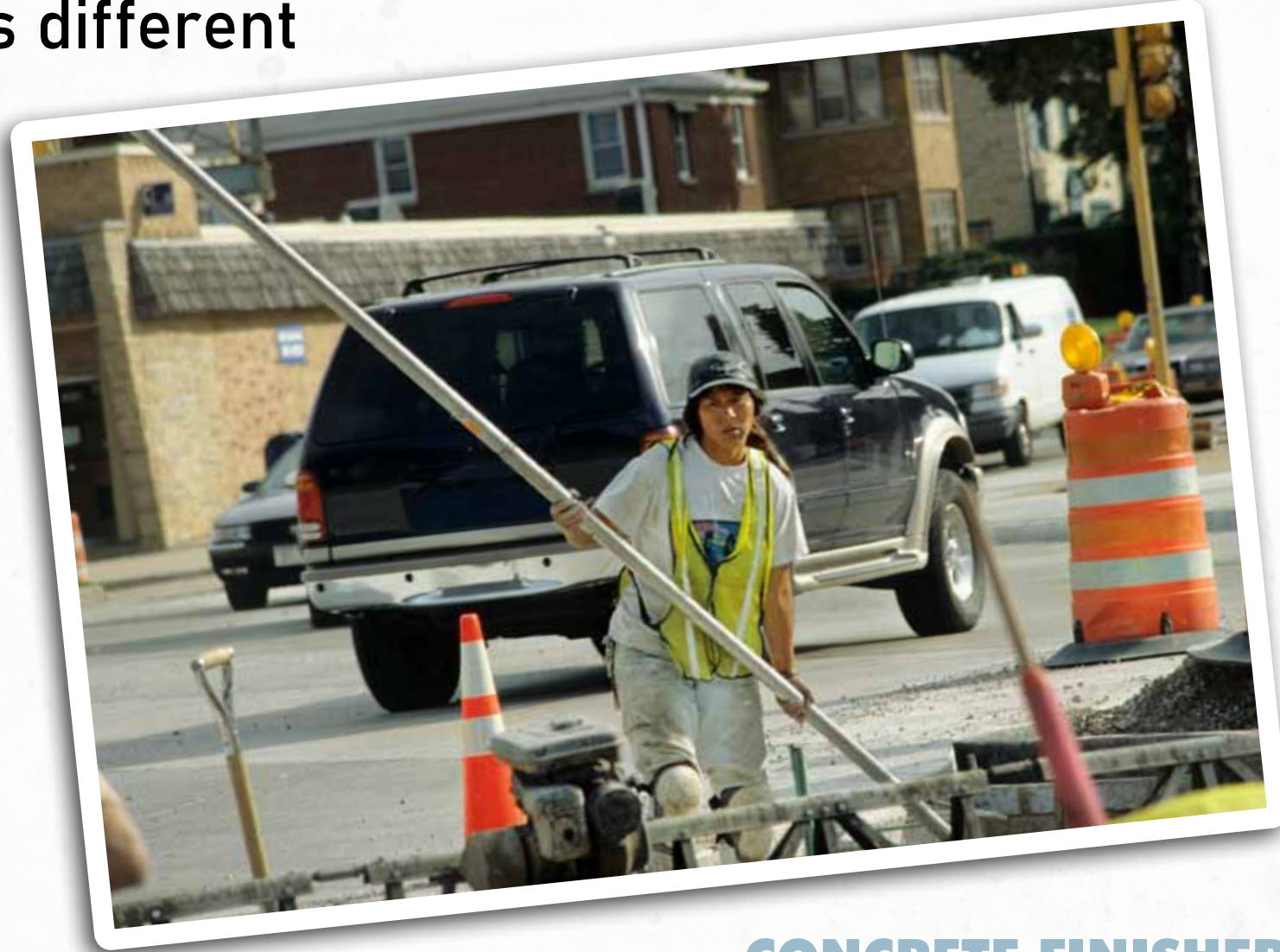
**MACHINIST**



You've got to just keep looking and looking until you can find something that you enjoy doing.

**WATER UTILITY WORKER**

Every day is different



**CONCRETE FINISHER**

I like being a small  
business owner



**OWNER/OPERATOR AUTO REPAIR SHOP**

This job may  
change some, but  
it has to be here



**CONCRETE FINISHER**

The challenge is  
thrilling



**HELICOPTER PILOT**

It's a field that's  
not going away



**MOLD-MAKER**



I'm pretty autonomous.  
I like to work on my  
own. I don't very often  
work as a team.



**ELECTRICIAN**

I had gone shopping for some shoes and this young woman was helping me and I said, "Boy, you look familiar," you know, and I didn't back off on it. "Gosh, where do I know you from?" And she said, "You arrested me for drunk driving." And it's like oh, never mind.



**DETECTIVE**

## **CAREER EXPLORATION TECHNIQUES TO ENCOURAGE WOMEN AND GIRLS TO THINK ABOUT NONTRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS (NTOS) AND CAREERS:**

- Present information on high-paying in-demand careers that are perceived to be “nontraditional” for females: machining, welding, carpentry, plumbing, electrical
- Show visuals of women working in NTO jobs: posters, career cards
- Talk to females about the advantages of considering nontraditional jobs: interesting, challenging, high-paying, meaningful work
- Present skills that can transfer from a traditionally female job to a nontraditional: heavy lifting in both nursing and carpentry

**IT'S TIME FOR**

**GIVEAWAY**

**ENTER TO WIN**





**What percentage of machinists  
in the U.S. are female?**



**What percentage of welders  
in the U.S. are female?**

What percentage of the US population is retired?



# Thank you for joining us!



Visit Her Own Words:

<https://nontraditionalcareers.com>

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