

# PHYSICS CAREERS

## Electrician

**Electricity enables us to see at night, to cook, to have heat and hot water, to communicate, to be entertained, and to do many other things. Without electricity, our lives would be unimaginably different. To learn more about being an electrician, read the interview with master electrician David Ellison.**

### *How did you become an electrician?*

I went to junior college to learn electronics—everything from TVs and radios to radio towers and television stations. But I didn't particularly like that sort of work. While working in a furniture factory, I got to know the master electrician for the factory, and I began working with him. Eventually he got me a job with a master electrician in town.

Most of my experience has been on the job—very little schooling. But back then, there wasn't a lot of schooling. Now they have some good classes.

### *What about electrical work made it more interesting than other fields?*

I enjoy working with something you can't see or smell—but if you do touch it, it'll let you know. And if you flip a light switch, there it is. I also enjoy wiring up the switches and safeties, and solving problems when they don't work.

### *Where do you currently work?*

I have been self-employed since 1989. About three years ago, I was invited to teach at the community college. I enjoy it. My students seem to relate better to the fact that I'm still working in the field. When I explain something to



David Ellison teaches electrician skills to students at a local community college.

them, I can talk from recent experience. Teaching helps me stay on top of the field, too.

### *Are there any drawbacks to your work?*

Electricity is dangerous. I've been burned twice over 30 percent of my body. Also, the hours can be bad. Owning my own business, I go from 6 in the morning until 9 or 10 at night. I am on call at the local hospital—I was there on Thanksgiving day. But that's the nature of my relationship with my customers.

### *What advice do you have for a student who is interested in becoming an electrician?*

If you know a local electrical contractor, go talk or visit for the day. Or take a class at the local community college to see if it interests you. Some companies have their own classes, usually one night a week. Going to school gives you some technical knowledge, but getting out and doing it is still the best way to learn.

