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## **Wise Alloys and Local Community College Join Forces To Create Maintenance Technician Training Program** *Alabama Officials Looking at Course for Use as Pilot Program*

MUSCLE SHOALS, ALA. -- In a collaborative effort with Northwest Shoals Community College, Wise Alloys is sending more than 70 of its maintenance technicians through a comprehensive training program covering everything from mill and machinery operations to Microsoft Word, company officials announced today.

The program will take between 18 and 24 months to complete and includes instruction for electrical and mechanical technicians broken down into four levels. The electrical technician instruction begins with topics such as “Basic Electrical Safety” and “Basic Computer Skills” and ends with “Modern Instrumentation” and “Advanced PLC (programmable logic controllers) Logic and Troubleshooting.”

For mechanical technicians, the program begins with topics including “Alignment Tools and Techniques” and “Rigging and Operation of Lifting Equipment” and finishes with “Advanced Hydraulics” and “Pneumatics.” Workers receive a salary increase with the successful completion of each level of instruction.

To replicate the challenges technicians will experience on the job, the instruction bay at Northwest Shoals Community College has been outfitted with everything from computer terminals to a wall full of motors. Wise Alloys has donated more than \$100,000 worth of equipment, including a compressor and six small electrical motors, to support the program.

“Technology is moving forward and this type of training is important, especially in an industry like ours,” said Wise Alloys Executive Vice President Mike Patterson. “The marketplace is changing and because of that, the customer is demanding consistency, quality and flexibility. One of the keys to progress is the skill and capability of those who do the work.”

“It’s great training,” said Don Burbank, a Wise Alloys electrician and union steward who is assisting in implementing the program. “This is stuff they’ll see in the plant. Everything now has gone to PLC’s (programmable logic controllers), so that’s an important part of the program.”

Jim Bonner, the college’s industrial maintenance and plant process technology instructor, said the program has caught the attention of Alabama’s Department of Post-Secondary Education, which is looking to adopt parts of the training for a pilot program.

Wise Alloys and college officials have been working “for at least a year and a half” to create and implement the training program, said Mike Witt, the college’s director of community services training for business & industry. He said the college and area industrial firms had partnered on similar efforts in the past and the program will evolve as the needs of those companies change.

“We’d been working with Reynolds Aluminum for years and now we’re teaming with Wise Alloys,” Witt said. “This will continue to adapt while it’s being implemented.”

Northwest Shoals Community College is a single, comprehensive two-year public institution of higher education. The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award the Associate in Arts, Associate in Science and the Associate in Applied Science degrees as well as certificates in occupationally specific areas accredits the college.

Located in the northwest corner of Alabama, the college is comprised of multiple campuses serving the counties of Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, and Lawrence, and the western portion of Winston County. Students come from both urban and rural communities to campus sites in the Shoals and Phil Campbell. The modern Northwest-Shoals is the result of the merger on Sept. 9, 1993, of Northwest Alabama and Shoals Community College. Northwest Alabama, started in Phil Campbell, is the state’s first junior college, founded in 1963.

Based in Muscle Shoals, Ala., Wise Alloys is the third-leading U.S. producer of aluminum can stock for the beverage and food industries. It is an environmentally friendly company that relies heavily on recycled aluminum in the production of its can stock. Its sister company, Wise Recycling, is one of the largest, direct-from-the-public collectors of aluminum beverage containers in the United States, operating shipping and processing locations east of the Mississippi River that support a network of neighborhood collection centers.

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