

Skilled Tradesmen Shortage Poses Threat and Opportunity

National Tradesmen Day Seeks to Close Skills Gap by Elevating Skilled Trades and Thanking America's Tradesmen

HUNTERSVILLE, N.C. (June 3, 2013)— America has a problem on its hands—one caused by a shortage of people willing to work with their hands. Manpower's newly released [talent shortage survey](#) reports that for the fourth consecutive year, skilled trades are the most difficult jobs to fill in the United States. The American Society of Civil Engineers says America's [roads and bridges are in disrepair](#), assigning a D+ grade to America's overall infrastructure. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate continues to hover at historically high levels while a critical need for skilled tradesmen exists. America doesn't have a jobs shortage. America has a skills shortage.

To acknowledge the invaluable contributions of trade professionals, [IRWIN Tools](#) initiated National Tradesmen Day in 2011. This year, IRWIN Tools will launch a multi-million dollar campaign aimed at raising national awareness leading up to the third annual National Tradesmen Day on Friday, September 20, 2013.

National Tradesmen Day is an opportunity for Americans to consider the contributions skilled tradesmen make to our lives. Their work ensures lights stay on and clean water flows from our faucets. Our way of life is possible due to the hard work of tradesmen. It's time we thank them for it. IRWIN Tools wants America to say "thanks" to these hard-working men and women who rarely receive the recognition they deserve.

Young people have noticed that manual labor is devalued in our culture and because of that stigma, in part, they no longer consider a career in the trades. While new housing starts in April surged to a five-year high, according to the Commerce Department, we still must address the troubling trend that only one skilled worker is entering the workforce for every three who are retiring or leaving these professions. Without an adequate supply of tradesmen, who will meet this growing demand and fuel the housing recovery and our longer term housing needs? IRWIN Tools is leading the campaign to change attitudes about the skilled trades so we can build America and keep it running strong.

Steel toes vs. Wing tips

At one time, ironworkers and welders were glorified. Photographs of tradesmen eating an open-air lunch on a girder high atop a yet-to-be completed skyscraper take us back to a very different world—one where working with your hands was a dignified way to earn a living. Today, a four-year degree and a desk job are considered the keys to a desirable lifestyle. Most high schools eliminated shop class years ago, and now only six percent of high school seniors consider a career in the trades. Schools should teach students that the trades offer challenging careers where they can often out-earn their college educated peers.

According to Rich Mathews, Senior Vice President of Marketing for IRWIN Tools, "It's time that we once again present the trades as a respectable career option for the next generation. Becoming a trained plumber, electrician, or welder offers a clear and stable career path where working with your hands allows you to contribute meaningfully to our society. We need to once again treat people who lace up boots each morning before heading to the jobsite with as much respect as those who tie polished wing tips and head to a high-rise office."

IRWIN's "Appreciation Events" Salute Tradesmen Across the Nation

IRWIN associates and their retail partners plan to thank tradesmen across the country on National Tradesmen Day— Friday, September 20, 2013. Irwin will be conducting events to provide many tradesmen with free products and other gifts from IRWIN as a token of appreciation. One such event will take place at the Freedom Tower in New York City. IRWIN employees will greet and thank the tradesmen who built the newest addition to New York City's skyline. Other appreciation events will take place that day at hundreds of jobsites nationwide, including in Chicago and Charlotte.

"IRWIN Tools is committed to starting a national dialogue about the skills gap. We need people to consider a career in the trades so we have tradesmen to build our cities and repair our infrastructure," said Mathews.

For information on National Tradesmen Day or ideas about how you can recognize tradesmen in your community, visit [www.nationaltradesmenday.com](#) or [www.facebook.com/nationaltradesmenday](#).

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About IRWIN Tools

IRWIN Tools manufactures and distributes a broad line of hand tools and power tool accessories under the IRWIN® brand including VISE-GRIP® pliers and wrenches, MARATHON® saw blades, QUICK-GRIP® clamping tools, SPEEDBOR® wood drilling bits, STRAIT-LINE® marking tools, UNIBIT® step drill bits, MARPLES® fine woodworking tools, and HANSON® taps and dies. IRWIN Tools is a part of Newell Rubbermaid's global portfolio of leading brands. For more information, call 1-800-GO-IRWIN or visit [www.irwin.com](#). IRWIN invites the nation to celebrate National Tradesmen Day, on Sept. 20, 2013.

