

...Building 'the cloud' in Central Oregon

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Local 29, Cement Masons Local 555, Heat and Frost Insulators Local 36, Painters Local 10, Roofers Local 49, Operating Engineers Local 701, Carpenters, and Laborers.

Burger, a business agent for Tu-alatin-based Local 290 who lives in Redmond, explained why the giant tech companies like the Prineville area so much:

1) Data centers need to keep their closely packed servers cool, and the high desert climate in Central Oregon is great for that purpose. "We have 300 days a year with freezing temperatures," he said, "so the area offers lots of free cooling and low humidity."

Low humidity is even more important than low temperatures. That's because where humidity is low, super-high-tech data centers can use a version of low-tech swamp cooler technology that dates back to ancient Persia. On a second story — above the long halls of servers — evaporating water can cool very efficiently. The high desert's natural cooling capability means data centers there don't need to rely on mechanical air conditioning, which provides a huge cost savings.

2) Even with the natural or "free cooling," data centers still require a lot of power and Central Oregon has lots of cheap hydroelectric power available.



Mike Baker, a member of IBEW Local 280 employed at Rosendin Electric, installs a buss fuse at Building 1 of Facebook's data center complex in Prineville.

Prineville sits just four miles off Bon-neville Power Administration's (BPA) main transmission line to California, and the agency is speeding up expansion of a substation to serve the new data centers.

Andrew Blum, a writer at Wired magazine, told the Oregonian newspaper recently that data centers "are kind of like the aluminum smelters of the Internet."

In fact, data centers are now using more and more of the electricity once used to power the region's aluminum plants before they were shut down. The Northwest Power Council projects that data centers may be using 10 percent of the Northwest's energy — two-thirds of the aluminum industries peak in the 1980s. Put in perspective, Oregon data centers already are using as much electricity as 239,000 homes.

3) Oregon offers huge tax advantages to high-tech industries, including data centers. No sales tax means companies can purchase equipment cheaper, and locating in an "enterprise zone" brings a 15-year property tax exemption on buildings and machinery.

Burger related how forward-looking Crook County and Prineville city officials were when they assembled huge tracts of "bare land — no farming or grazing, just sagebrush" — into enterprise zones to attract high tech investment.

Jason Carr, Prineville manager of Economic Development for Central Oregon (EDCO), said another 500 to 600 acres are sitting ready for development today.

Carr defended the tax breaks, pointing out that Facebook and Apple will pay property taxes on their land, and franchise fees to the City for their electricity, as well as voluntary payments in lieu of taxes.

And while acknowledging that the data centers will provide very few long-term jobs, he still characterized the developments as "a pretty big boon for the city." When Facebook's project is completed, he estimates that long-term employment will be "close to 100 full time employees with health benefits."

Oregon's construction workers aren't complaining either.

Several members of Local 290 who live in Central Oregon talked to the Labor Press prior to a union meeting in Redmond.

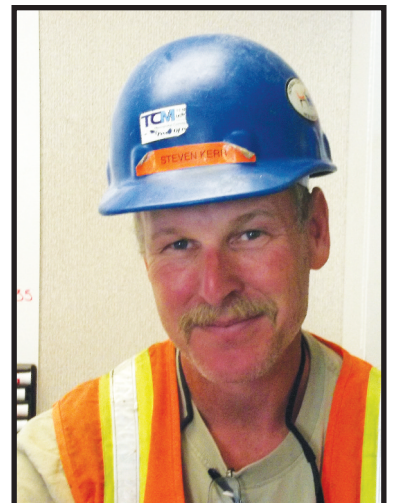
"I sat home for a year-and-a-half. Now I'm back to the tools," said Jeffrey Nelson, who has 21 years in the trade.

Nelson said he enjoys the regular work, too — Monday through Friday, eight hours a day, 40 hours a week, without much overtime.

Foreman Steve Kerr, who lives in John Day, said it's nice to work locally. "Now I can go home every weekend. I could make it for my grandkid's birth,"



Chris Rockwood, a plumber with a wife and two kids, was out of work for a year-and-a-half. "Eighteen months with no work was challenging," he said.



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Fitter Brent Bishop said before Facebook broke ground he sat out of work for a year. "It was real ugly. I lost my insurance. This is the steadiest and

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