

Faces of Thacker Pass: Roshawn S., Craft-Based Safety

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At Thacker Pass, every story matters. Our Faces of Thacker Pass features aim to share the behind-the-scenes stories of the people, their diverse roles and the vital part they play in advancing our project.

Roshawn S. is a pipefitter by trade who is now working on Craft-Based Safety at Thacker Pass. His main job is to connect with craft professionals to encourage safe behaviors and draw out their best safety practices from being closest to the work.

This is his second Bechtel project during a long career as a pipefitter and foreman, working on construction sites in Pennsylvania, California, Arizona, and the southwest. He has moved to Winnemucca for the job along with his wife and four dogs.

We also learned about one of his first jobs, working for a certain, very well-known mouse.

Where are you from?

I was born in Anaheim in Southern California.

There's a technique to observing safety behaviors in a way that people receive them in the right way and the spirit that they're given. How do you do it?

I came up through the craft and have walked in their shoes. I know their struggles. That experience being a pipefitter definitely helped.

You're interacting with people and you're talking to them. And some people accept it right away and that's the easy part. The hard part is when you run into somebody that is like, well, you're Safety and they want to give you a hard time about it.

So I say 'I'm trying to give you some knowledge that maybe at one point I didn't know, and now I'm trying to pass it to you to make you a safer craft professional.'

People that know me will say, 'yeah, Roshawn was a pipefitter at one time, and so he kind of knows what we're dealing with.'

I've been injured on jobs, and I said 'No. I'm going to help my brothers and sisters not get hurt and go home the way they came.'

What would you say to a young person considering a career in the building trades?

The reason I got into the trades is I wanted to learn how to weld and because I like to build stuff. I actually went to college to learn how to weld, and my teacher was from my Local 250 in LA. He kept talking about being in the trade, and I didn't know anything about it. He said there's on-the-job training. There's training after that, you know, you can learn a skill, and because you learn the skill, now you have more than a job, you have a career path. And I was like, 'Oh, that's what I want.'

I can pursue a career in not just one thing, but multiple things because most of the trades have many hats that you can go into, multiple things that are specialties. And so this one little tree grew into a big tree.

What are your thoughts on working on the Thacker Pass project, given its importance for the nation?

Oh, it makes it very important for me. I mean, for me to know that I had a hand in something that's not just something that's in the city or the state, but nationally and worldwide is a great feeling. I feel a lot of pride being out here on this job. We know that this, the lithium that comes out of this plant, will go towards battery technology that will give us energy storage for all the other things that we want to do.

This is the first plant in the United States that's like this. I'm hoping that I can stay for the second phase, too.

How did you end up working at Disneyland?

As you know, Californians love Disneyland. A friend of mine that I ran track with in high school and college said, 'We need money to live!' We heard that Disneyland had openings for their summer jobs.

I worked in the restaurants doing the bussing and making sure things were clean all the time, and then moved up to being sort of an area lead. When they were building Fantasmic, I was working at night and got to see them putting everything in and testing everything. So that was a fun time.

With Disney, your external customers and your internal customers are both the same. So the people that come into the park are very important to Disneyland, but also the people that work there. So it's almost like out here. It's like you have a small family of people that are all working together for the better of the whole.