

Faces of Thacker Pass: Sarah W., Ironworker Foreperson

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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.

Left: Sarah W, Ironworker Foreperson. Right: Sarah and her crew are pictured working on the Thacker Pass Filter Building.

Sarah W. is an ironworker foreperson at Thacker Pass. She was named Foreperson of the Month in Dec 2025.

She's been an Ironworker for 17 years and has worked on major projects in San Diego and Seattle, including an Amazon facility in Seattle, known as The Spheres.

There are several types of ironworkers. Structural ironworkers move and install large girders and beams on bridges and building frames. Ornamental ironworkers install pre-constructed materials on elevators, stairways and balconies. Reinforcing ironworkers strengthen the concrete in walls, piers and roads. To learn more about ironworkers, other trades and apprenticeship programs, visit the [Northern Nevada Building Trades apprenticeship page](#).

Where were you born and where did you grow up?

I'm originally from Alaska. I was born in Soldotna. I was very young when I left so I don't really remember much of it, but it's two hours outside of Anchorage. I grew up in Washington but I live in San Diego, now.

How did you become an Ironworker?

I just applied! I first thought (ironworking) was making steel, like pouring steel. I knew I needed to get into a union. I grew up really poor, so I didn't have a lot of options for school.

And I turned out to be good at it. It's exciting, always new places. It's doing something that women generally aren't supposed to do and I like that.

What's your advice to a girl or young woman considering a career in the building trades?

I would tell them not to listen to what people say. (In the past) I've been told I don't belong here, that women burn out faster than men. You're capable of way more than people say. There are going to be times where you're frustrated and angry. But at the end of the day, you're the only person that gets to decide what you're capable of doing.

The pay is excellent. The financial independence, the benefits, the pension... I wouldn't change anything about the union I joined.

Could you take a moment to reflect on the project we're on here?

I like the fact that we're so safety oriented. Nobody wants to get hurt or see the person working with them or a friend get hurt. And I think that energy storage is really important because we need it. It makes us more independent as a nation, and we move away from relying on other countries as much. I'm proud to be here.

What's a hobby, skill, or talent that people might not know about?

I really like picking up rocks – like digging for gemstones. I like leatherworking. Tool scabbards, wallets, anything that's made out of leather, pretty much. If somebody hands me something that they want made, I can generally make it. I like to like dabble in a lot of different things!

Left: An example of Sarah's leatherwork, and right: one of Sarah's paintings.