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More Women Entering Skilled Trades in Northeast Indiana *Gains Documented in Manufacturing and Construction*

An increasing number of women in northeast Indiana are entering the manufacturing and construction workforces – typically considered non-traditional industries for women, according to data released by Northeast Indiana Works.

Moreover, the percentage share of women in those workforces is also rising.

The number of women in manufacturing in northeast Indiana grew from 20,690 in 2011 to 25,055 in 2018 – an increase of 21.1 percent. Women’s share of the total region manufacturing workforce increased from 28.7 percent to 29.7 percent in that time frame.

The number of women in construction in northeast Indiana grew from 1,714 in 2011 to 2,205 in 2018 – or an increase of 28.6 percent. Women’s share of the total region construction workforce increased from 12.6 percent to 13.6 percent in that time frame.

The source for women in manufacturing and construction data was Quarterly Workforce Indicators from the U.S. Census Bureau, 3rd Quarter Comparisons. The year 2011 was chosen as the starting point because that’s when the recession’s impact on employment began easing.

Edmond O’Neal, president of Northeast Indiana Works, said there could be a number of reasons for the increases, including that occupations in manufacturing and construction generally pay more than occupations in many other industries, including retail and food/accommodations; employers increasingly are reaching out to diversify their workforces; and technology advances make some jobs in manufacturing and construction less labor intensive.

“We have a long way to go,” O’Neal said, “but the notion that skilled trades jobs are just for men seems to be changing.”