As Trades Hiring Tightens, Hurricane Fence Trains Installers In-House

September 01, 2026

RICHMOND, VA - September 01, 2026 -
Construction employers posted roughly four skilled trades openings last year for every worker who entered those fields through an apprenticeship, and contractors have been answering the gap by training people who have never done the work. Hurricane Fence, a fence and gate contractor in business since 1994, is doing that at its four offices in Virginia and North Carolina, where it has opened installer roles that require no prior fencing experience.

Nearly 600,000 skilled trades jobs were posted in the United States last year against about 150,000 apprenticeship entrants, according to a report the real estate services firm JLL published in April. The same report projects that 2.1 million skilled trades positions could go unfilled by 2030. The U.S. Department of Education puts the retirement-to-replacement ratio across construction and manufacturing at five to two, meaning two workers arrive for every five who leave.

Associated Builders and Contractors member firms put $1.6 billion into craft, safety, and leadership education in a single year, reaching more than 1.3 million course attendees, and spent an average of 7.5 percent of payroll on workforce development. In June, the association and Meta Platforms announced America's

Workforce Academy, a $115 million program that pairs a five-week course with a job offer from a contractor and is aimed at data center construction.

"We stopped waiting for experienced installers to walk through the door, because they are not out there," said Mike Kelly, co-owner of Hurricane Fence, which belongs to the association. "The ones who stay in this trade almost never show up knowing how to set a post."

Reading a grade before setting posts, or hanging a gate that will not sag, is knowledge that passes from one person to another on a job site. The people who have it are the ones closest to leaving. Hurricane Fence completed 3,143 projects across its markets in 2025, a mix of residential fencing and perimeter security at government and data center sites, part of the same buildout the Meta program targets.

One of the openings on the company's careers page is a fence helper job based in Richmond and Ashland, written as an entry point for people with no background in the trade. Helpers work under experienced crews on chain link, wood, vinyl, aluminum, and ornamental jobs, and they take on more of it as they learn. Many of the company's project managers and crew leads started in that role.

Field crews complete OSHA 30-hour safety training, a federal course on hazard recognition and site safety for workers who carry some supervisory responsibility. Candidates who already run skid steers, mini excavators, augers, or forklifts get preference. Installers who move onto the gate side can work toward certification through IDEA, an industry body that credentials designers and installers of automated gate systems, the kind that open on a keypad, card reader, or remote. Hurricane Fence also lists residential and commercial fence erector roles that ask for one to three years in the trade, and commercial candidates must pass a background check and qualify for access to military and federal facilities.

Because the company runs both residential and commercial work out of offices in Richmond and Portsmouth, Virginia, Dunn, North Carolina, and a Northern Virginia location that opened at the start of 2026, crews stay busy through the winter instead of hitting the seasonal layoffs that Hurricane Fence says drive trained installers into other trades.

"Somebody has to be willing to teach them," Kelly said. "That costs a foreman a season of moving slower than they want to, and we pay for it, because in five years that helper is running the crew."

The Richmond office answers at (804) 353-6030, and applications for all Virginia and North Carolina openings go through the company's website. Property owners and general contractors can request an in-person estimate at the same number, and photos of completed work and customer ratings are available for review.

About Hurricane Fence

Founded in 1994, Hurricane Fence is a licensed and insured fence contractor serving Virginia, North Carolina, and the greater Mid-Atlantic from offices in Richmond and Portsmouth, Virginia, Dunn, North Carolina, and Northern Virginia. The company installs residential and commercial fencing, gate systems, and access control, and holds Virginia Class A Contractor license number 2705024990. Hurricane Fence is an American Fence Association Blue Ribbon company and maintains an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau. More information is available at https://www.hurricanefenceinc.com/.

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For more information about Hurricane Fence Company, contact the company here:Hurricane Fence Inc.Tina Estep(804) 353-6030testep@hurricanefence.com1300 Dinneen Street, Richmond, VA 23220

Hurricane Fence Company

Virginia's fence authority since 1994. Hurricane Fence delivers residential and commercial fencing across VA, NC, and the Mid-Atlantic ? backed by 30+ years of experience, in-house gate operators, and 20,000+ completed projects.

Website: https://www.hurricanefenceinc.com/

Email: testep@hurricanefence.com

Phone: (804) 353-6030