



News Release

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NMCC students preparing for current and future opportunities in off-shore wind industry

Aroostook County - Although offshore wind power projects may be a few years away in Maine, students working to become the first wind power technicians educated in New England, at Northern Maine Community College, are participating in training they will need to work in the emerging industry.

In an effort to make the inaugural class of wind power technicians even more attractive to prospective employers when they graduate this coming May, NMCC wind power technology instructor Wayne Kilcollins has added an optional component to his innovative program. Two new courses afford students the opportunity to train and earn certification in helicopter underwater egress training and surface vessel emergency operations, the latter of which is required by the U.S. Coast Guard for all workers on oil and natural gas platforms, and now for technicians working on offshore wind projects.

“This is not a required part of our curriculum, but for students who may end up working on offshore wind projects this would be something needed before beginning their work assignment. It makes the students that much more marketable. It is a great addition to their resume,” said Kilcollins.

NMCC’s wind power technology instructor first learned about the new Coast Guard training requirement for technicians working on offshore wind projects at a safety program he was attending in Texas this past summer. The tower rescue “train the trainer” certification program was focused on safety practices for technicians working at heights.

Between sessions at the program, Kilcollins went on-line to research institutions that offered the surface vessel and helicopter emergency training. One of the first to pop up on the screen was Maine Maritime Academy in Castine. From Texas, he called the school and began to make arrangements to partner with the college to offer the courses to NMCC wind power technology students.

In recent weeks, 13 of Kilcollins second year students traveled to MMA to participate in classroom and hands-on training exercises to earn certifications in both surface vessel emergency operations and helicopter underwater egress training. Included were several hours of training in a pool conducting exercises to simulate what would happen in the event of a surface vessel or helicopter emergency at sea.

One the students taking part was Scott Neimi, who is thankful for the opportunity to gain the additional training as his future may include working with offshore wind.

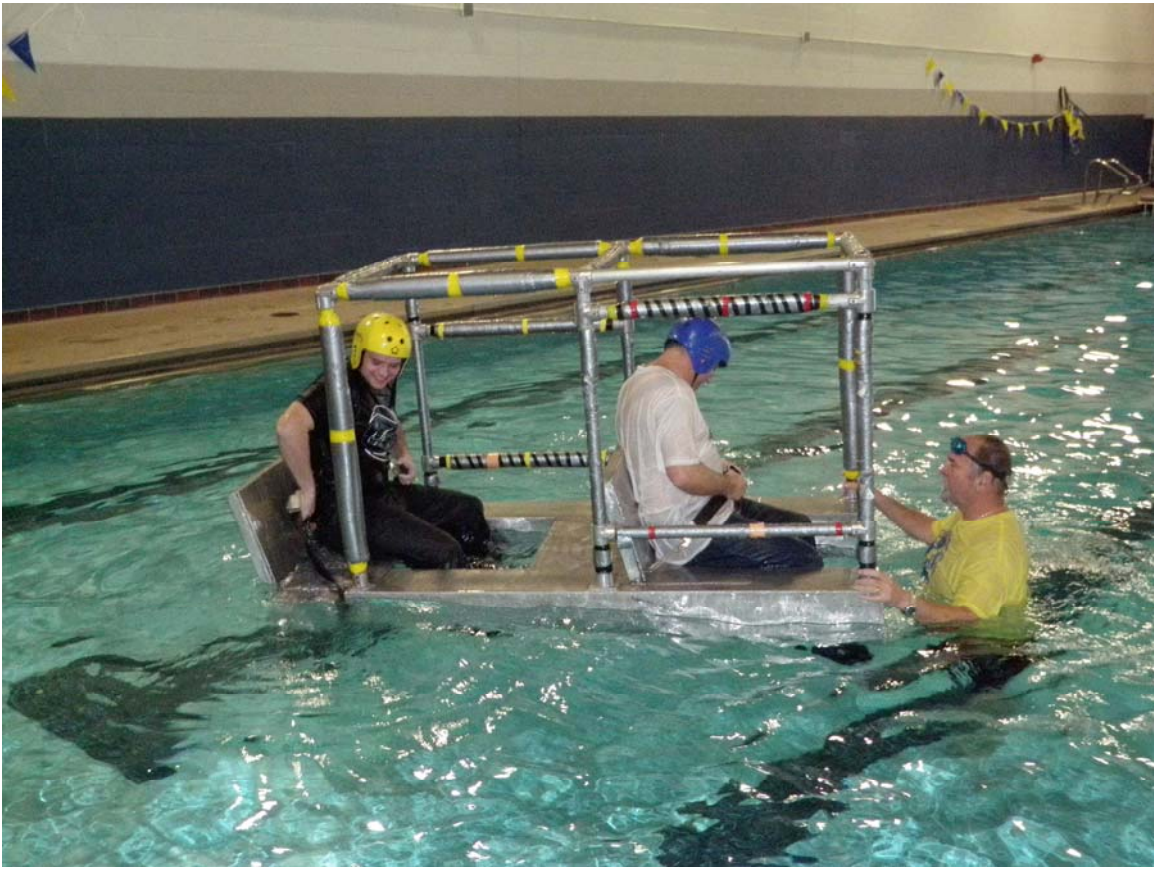
“I was kind of nervous about being flipped upside down in the water strapped into a helicopter simulator, but it went smoothly. With the training, I’ll be better prepared to know what to do without panicking in the event of a water emergency,” said Neimi.

The Lewiston resident could be one of NMCC’s first wind power technology graduates to work in offshore wind. His wife is a native of Portugal, and the couple may move to Europe after Neimi earns his degree this spring so she can pursue her graduate degree in England.

“The development of the offshore wind industry is much further ahead in Europe. There is a large project under construction off the coast of England right now and other projects already in operation,” said Neimi.

With advance work currently underway for offshore wind test sites off the coast of Maine and the Cape Wind project off Cape Cod, Massachusetts currently in the permitting phase, Kilcollins is hopeful that job opportunities will be available in off shore wind for his students who choose to pursue a career in the field. He has spoken with firms working on the Cape Wind project that have expressed a willingness to partner with NMCC on future employment and internship opportunities for students.

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Northern Maine Community College wind power technology student Justin Foran (left) of Milo and instructor Wayne Kilcollins (center) undergo hands-on helicopter underwater egress training at Maine Maritime Academy recently. Working with the students is MMA instructor John McMillan.