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A Day in the Life of Stacie Reeves, lineman, Mt. Clemens Service Center

By [Corporate Communications](#) on August 31, 2015 9:36 AM | [Comments: 71](#) | Average rating: 3.77

Editor's Note: A Day in the Life is a series that spotlights employees who support our system of priorities and personify DTE Energy values as they perform their jobs. Stacie Reeves, lineman, Distribution Operations, is featured today.

Stacie works as a lineman for Distribution Operations at Mt. Clemens Service Center. She is currently our company's only female lineman and first African-American female lineman.

1 p.m. - I wake up. I am on the split-shift and for the past four weeks I have been working midnights. After I wake up, I do some laundry and hang out with my children, who are home because of summer vacation. I have two sons, Jeff who is 15 (and about to start driver's training) and Justin who is 11.



Photo by Mark Houston

It is a little difficult for my family because of the hours I work. It can be hard on them because they don't see me a lot. It is definitely a struggle for me to cater to the needs of my children, my husband, our house and my work as a lineman. So when I am home with my family, I make it count and spend quality time with them.

Hanging out with my children differs on a day to day basis, but every day we make sure to study the Bible together. Afterwards, Jeff and Justin will separately go and read a chapter from their Bible. Once my boys are done reading, we watch some TV together and just enjoy each other's company.

4:30 p.m. - My husband, Jeff comes home. We've been married for 16 awesome years.

5 p.m. - I get dinner ready and then we eat together.

7 p.m. - It's back to bed for a quick nap before I have to get up and go to work again.

8:30 p.m. - My alarm goes off. I take a shower and begin getting ready for work.

A lot of people ask me how I became a lineman. If I could do anything, I would have been a designer. I do flower arrangements and other small design projects on the side now just as a hobby. However, my dad encouraged me to learn a trade so I would always be able to support myself, so I actually started off my career as a construction electrician.

I was a construction electrician for 15 years, until I got laid off. After I was laid off, I started doing odd jobs just to be able to provide for my family. Then, a friend from my congregation told me that DTE was hiring meter readers. I applied and was hired as a meter reader making \$10/hour, but I was determined to leave meter reading and get back into working with electricity.

I thought that it would be easy moving from being a construction electrician to being a lineman, but it was extremely difficult. It took me a while to retrain my brain to think like a lineman rather than like a construction electrician. The entire thought process is different. When working in construction, almost everything you work with is dead (doesn't have an electric current), whereas when you are a lineman almost everything you work with is live and the voltage is much higher, making the work more dangerous. Furthermore, as a lineman you are out in all the different elements working on a pole, rather than working inside a building.

Training was exhausting emotionally and physically, but more so emotionally. This was because every day from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. I would come in knowing that I was the only woman, and most of the time the only African American, so often I would feel alone. However, there was always someone there to make me feel at home and comfortable.

There were a lot of guys who looked out for me during training. One particular time during training at our Technical Development Center, I was trying to get over a cross arm (the horizontal piece of wood connected to the pole) and I said I couldn't do it - I was ready to quit. Chuck Dortenzio, Local 17 safety director, climbed up onto the pole and said, "you better not tell me you can't do it, because you can. Just do it." Ever since then, Chuck has been my hero and inspiration.

It took me four and a half years to complete my training. After my "graduation," I cried because I was so

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excited.

9:10 p.m. - I've finished my routine and head out the door for Mt. Clemens Service Center. There is little traffic at night and it only takes about five minutes to get there from my house. It's nice, especially if I want to sleep in.

9:30 p.m. - I arrive at work and have my pre-job brief.

On a day to day basis, I constantly remind myself that I am not just the only female lineman in DTE, but the first black female lineman at DTE. This makes me work harder to represent and inspire all women who feel like they can be a lineman too. Some of the guys I work with tell me that I am too hard on myself, but I feel like since I have been supported by so many people here, I need to strengthen myself so I can support others who come into our business. I have something to prove.

10 p.m. - I am out on the road to my job. My partner isn't with me for this first job. He wanted to go to his kid's baseball game and take them out to dinner after, so it is just me and the peaceful quiet of the night.

When I arrive at the job there are balloons on the distribution line causing some interference. Once I remove the balloons, I go check the voltage to see if the equipment is working properly and if the power is restored.

12 a.m. - I am back at Mt. Clemens Service Center to pick up my partner. We head out to the city of Warren for another job. At this job, I have to climb the pole again and change the taps, while my partner changes the taps at the back of the house we were at. We checked the voltage and everything was fine.

3 a.m. - We have gotten our new job and we drive out to New Baltimore. We had reports there was a downed wire. It took us a while to search for it. However, it turns out that it was not an electrical job, but a problem with the telephone service wire.

3:45 a.m. - We receive another call to go back out to Warren. The wind is picking up now and a lot of people are losing power. We acknowledge the job and route ourselves for Warren.

4:10 a.m. - We arrive at the job location and find there is a fused lateral (the part that connects customers' homes to the electrical line) that had blown the entire fuse. Before we can fix this, we have to check the other lateral to see if that also was blown. We go to the house where we think the lateral is located, wake up the residents to let them know we are entering their backyard and find that the lateral was not there. So we went back around to the first pole and I try to fuse the cut-out. A cut-out is a combination of fuse and switch, and is used in overhead feeder lines to protect transformers from current surges and overloads. The cut-out blew, so I have to change the entire cut-out and refuse it.

However, the cut-out still wouldn't hold. Once we finally got the cut-out to hold, we drove around to see if there was anything else wrong with the power in the area. By the time we confirmed all was well, we had received a new call in St. Clair Shores where the police and fire departments were there waiting for us.

6:30 a.m. - We arrive at St. Clair Shores to relieve the police and fire departments and begin working on the problem - a street light wire that had come down. The wire was still hot, so my partner climbed the pole and cut the wire down, while I in turn coiled up the wire and put it in our truck.

8:45 a.m. - We pull into Mt. Clemens Service Center, park our truck and put all of our equipment away.

9 a.m. - I pull into my driveway at home. Once inside the house, I say hi to my kids, who are awake and making themselves breakfast, go take a shower, set my alarm for 1 p.m. and go to sleep.

Article written by Liz Lawer, Distribution's student intern

Values in action

We see our work through the eyes of those we serve ... and know that our work is a powerful means to serve others.

We play to win as a team ... and put the needs of our enterprise first.

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I am so proud of you. Keep going on strong, do what you do. Great and inspiring story

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Excellent Story Stacie, Very Encouraging

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