

Bridget Mohr



Title: Project Engineer
Company: NPPD (Nebraska Public Power District)
College: South Dakota School of Mines & Technology

What attracted you to the company?

A power plant is an unusual, but not unheard of, place to find a Chemical Engineer. I was looking for a non-traditional challenge for my particular set of engineering skills. Future project plans that I would be working on required chemical and engineering knowledge that nobody else had at the plant. Most importantly, though, I knew I could feel good about joining a company that is passionate about its mission to provide safe, low-cost power to enhance the quality of life for Nebraskans.

Please list some of your duties:

I help develop, design, implement, and install projects at a coal-fire power plant. I am a group member on teams that come up with solutions to plant problems. I do cost estimation for new projects as well as write up proposals for them to be approved. I am directly involved with the installation of all my projects.

What are the best/most interesting things about your job?

Currently, I'm on a project that allows me to use my knowledge of chemistry to reduce the plant's environmental impact – making the power plant even more eco-friendly than it already is.

What is the most rewarding thing about your job?

I get to apply math and science to problems that I can see and fix at an operating plant that provides affordable, safe power to Nebraskans – thus improving the quality of their life. I know the projects I work on directly improve the safety and affordability of that power.

How did you decide on this career path?

I enjoyed math and sciences in high school. My uncle (who is also a chemical engineer), father (mechanical engineer) and chemistry teacher were major inspirations to me – not just academically, but in a humanitarian way. They made me realize that engineering was important not because it can make technology better or turn a profit, but because it can make life for people better.

What kind of school, classes, and training most prepared you with the necessary skills?

In high school, math, chemistry, and physics helped form the basis for my future engineering classes. In college, calculus, organic chemistry, heat transfer, thermodynamics, and many other classes rounded out the list of "things I should know". But what I learned as an intern at several companies was perhaps the most valuable – the application of my knowledge to a wealth of different problems.

Do you make a good living?

I believe I make a very good living. I have a very comfortable financial situation.

What kind of technology do you use and interact with?

I use computers and calculators, mainly. Some technology we will be installing at the plant is probably over the heads of anyone outside of the power or chemical industry. Most programs I use aren't very foreign (Word, Excel, Power Point). On occasion I'll even write a small program to do math I don't want to do – so I get to use some programming skills I've acquired in college.

What advice would you give to students who are undecided on a career choice?

- 1.) Don't decide "not to decide." In other words, choose SOMETHING that is interesting to you. If it doesn't work out, chances are you'll have a better idea of what you actually enjoy than if you hadn't tried anything at all.
- 2.) Don't skimp on your education. Sometimes there are career options you didn't even know existed.
- 3.) Don't rule out careers that appear to be too technical or just for "smart people". Even if it sounds uninteresting or too hard – appearances are often deceiving with these fields. Take the time to give each option a good hard look before passing it up.