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West-MEC upgrade in Buckeye on hold until 2014

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By Colleen Sikorski

The Republic | azcentral.com

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Western Maricopa Educational Center has begun upgrading its Glendale campus, but the Buckeye campus won't see construction until 2014 and the Surprise campus has no set construction timeline.

The Career and Technical Education district partners with 12 [school districts](#) throughout the West Valley. Voters approved a \$74.9 million bond in November.

That bond will fund construction of the collaboration center, upgrades to Glendale campus and three new campuses in Buckeye, Surprise and north Phoenix.

Now, construction is under way to expand the Glendale campus by 38,000 square feet, which includes a demonstration lab, classrooms and an outdoor workspace.

West-MEC is also working on construction of new north Phoenix campus site near Phoenix Deer Valley Airport, said Rachel Cohen, West-MEC public information officer.

West-MEC budgeted \$12.1 million to develop the Surprise campus and \$22.1 million to develop the Buckeye campus.

Preliminary preparations for the Buckeye campus have begun, but the district has yet to purchase land for the future Surprise campus.

The district is still looking at a number of potential sites for the Surprise campus and has not yet determined what programs will be offered there, Cohen said.

West-MEC purchased Buckeye's 17-acre future campus site in 2009. The parcel of land sits near Airport Road just south of Interstate 10. The district tentatively plans to break ground on the Buckeye campus during the first few months of 2014 and start classes in fall 2015.

The Buckeye campus will take multiple construction phases to complete, said Clay Goodman, Estrella Mountain's vice president of occupational [education](#).

The Buckeye campus will focus on an [energy](#) program with help from Estrella Mountain Community College. West-MEC and Estrella Mountain established a partnership to design the program in spring 2012, Goodman said.

Right now, the project is in the discussion and planning stages, Goodman said.

West-MEC's energy program will be the same as Estrella Mountain's energy program which trains workers for fossil-fuel and nuclear power facilities.


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Estrella Mountain received a \$13.5 million grant in October 2012 to add to its energy program and make curriculum changes. Those improvements will be reflected in West-MEC's program.

"The energy programs at Estrella are well-positioned to handle this," Goodman said. "The grant will help us develop the programs that industries are looking for and build a workforce that will help meet industry needs."

The program will initially focus on producing technicians — mechanics, electricians, and radiation protection technicians — because Arizona's energy industry has a need to fill those jobs, Goodman said. The West-MEC program will include facilities for simulating power plant operations.

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