

Meet Ashley Coleman, Civil Engineer

Women's
History
Month



#WomenInPower

She helps keep costs down and the lights on for our customers, and takes great pride in that.

We're celebrating Women's History Month this March by introducing you to 10 women who help power your life at Duke Energy and Piedmont Natural Gas. They advance our company with their vision, talent, hard work and creativity. These trailblazing women – including a nuclear engineer, astrophysicist and lineman – reveal inspiring stories of persistence, pluck and achievement in largely male-dominated fields. A diverse workplace isn't just a nice idea, it's a competitive necessity. Today, meet Ashley Coleman, a civil engineer based in Charlotte, NC.

What do you do?

I manage many different projects to make sure the power plant is running optimally. Anything and everything from fuels testing to project management. On any given day, I might be managing a project to replace steam valves or conducting a boiler inspection for our power plants.

Why is what you do important?

I make sure our plants operate as efficiently as possible. I help keep costs down and the lights on for Duke Energy customers, and I take great pride in that.

How did you end up in this career?

I graduated with a master's in civil engineering with a focus on energy efficiency. My college had a job fair and Duke Energy was there. They told me about a three-year plant engineering rotational program at the Roxboro Steam Station. It sounded like an exciting opportunity to me, and it was. I was on an operations crew for a year, then maintenance for a year, then fuel flexibility in strategic engineering.

What inspired you to become an engineer?

Growing up, I didn't know what engineering was. I'm the first in my family to study something technical. In eighth grade, I shadowed a family friend at his engineering job. He explained what engineering was and how my talents could be useful. It really sparked an interest in me. For me, it took a personal interaction with someone to kindle my imagination about engineering. Now I volunteer to speak to students about math and science and engineering, especially at minority and low-income schools. You can't dream about something you don't know about.

What is it like to be in a nontraditional field for women?

To me it's completely thrilling to do something out of the norm. Sometimes when I tell people what I do for a living, I get the big eyes. They're surprised that I would take an interest in being hands-on in a traditionally male-dominated field.