

Media Release  
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### **Business expansion creates new jobs**

Sustained growth during last year by Local Lines company, Top Energy has seen a big boost in the number of new jobs the company has created in the Far North, as well renewing its commitment to on-going job-skills training.

7 Apprentice Line Mechanic and Electrician positions have been filled by the company's Contracting Services division, while PHONE*plus*, Top Energy's Customer Contact Centre business, set up it's third Contact Centre operation, based in Kerikeri. Employing 12 people, the Kerikeri Contact Centre handles telesales and customer support functions for multi-national corporate clients.

According to Kathryn Starr, PHONE*plus* Company Manager, the Kerikeri Contact Centre builds on the growth achieved at the company's Kaikohe operation, while providing access to the region's Eastern area staff pool. There are now 35 full-time equivalent staff employed at the company's Kaikohe and Kerikeri operations, including several experienced Contact Centre staff from Auckland and beyond, who now live in the Far North.

Says Starr, "We have been successful in recruiting some excellent staff locally. Staff put forward by WINZ have responded very well to our intensive training, while the largest group have come from people who are returning to the workforce after having a family."

Top Energy General Manager Contracting, Dr. Kevin Doherty, is buoyant about growth in his operation too. "Our Contracting Division is growing well and the 7 new staff have been taken on to help with our increased workloads. We have plans to appoint more staff during this year, as work demands. As far as job-skills training is concerned, our new Apprentices will attend the Top Energy Lines School where they'll be taught various skills which will introduce them to the rigors of the power industry. This training includes safety practices and general electrical theory, qualifying them for unit standards, based on the industry NZQA framework", he said.

According to Doherty, as well as their on-the-job training, Apprentice Line Mechanics and Electricians will also work through an education programme, which includes 3 national

certificates. Apprentice Line Mechanics are likely to complete their formal training in two to three years and Apprentice Electricians in three to four years.

Both Top Energy operating divisions plan further growth during this year and the flow-on effect from this growth may be further boosted in the region by the granting of Resource and Building Consents, allowing the company to progress with expansion of its Ngawha Power Station later this year. END.

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Pic 1: Kerikeri Contact Centre Supervisor, Israel Wirihana (standing) with Shift Supervisor, Maria Wihongi fine-tuning a training session for PHONEplus Telesales Operators.



Pic 2: Top Energy Apprentice Line Mechanics training at the company's Lines School.

