

Ingalls Shipbuilding's Virtual Reality Welding Lab Surpasses 1,000 Trainees



PASCAGOULA, Miss.—HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding division's [Virtual Reality \(VR\) Welding Lab](#) has officially surpassed 1,000 trainees since opening in January 2025. The milestone highlights the impact of Ingalls' investment in advanced training technology and the collaborative support of the U.S. Navy, AccelerateMS and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC) which helped establish the facility.

The VR Welding Lab integrates immersive simulations into Ingalls' established welding certification process, enabling new and experienced shipbuilders up to 10 times more hands-on practice in a safe and controlled environment.

“By leveraging immersive technology, we’re ensuring our shipbuilders enter the workforce with stronger, more consistent welding fundamentals,” said Anna Bourdais, director of the Maritime Training Center of Excellence at Ingalls Shipbuilding. “Our collaboration with the U.S. Navy and regional workforce partners is key to making these investments successful and we’re already seeing improvements in our Ingalls-trained shipbuilders.”

The milestone highlights the value of Mississippi’s statewide workforce partnerships when they align with industry needs in order to expand high-quality training opportunities, which align with industry needs. By combining federal support, state workforce investment and community college instruction with Ingalls’ expertise in shipbuilding and skilled-trades development, this partnership delivers a scalable, industry-aligned program that strengthens Mississippi’s workforce pipeline and supports long-term economic resilience across the region.

Shipbuilders who complete the VR program report immediate improvements in welding technique, confidence and readiness for certification. Welding Apprentice Olivia Saranthus says the VR training has already made a noticeable difference in her skill development.

“I had never welded before, but the VR system helped me learn, improve my technique and clearly see where I needed to get better. It’s given me a lot more confidence,” Saranthus said. “Even though I am still in training, I can already see my welds getting better, and the extra practice has helped me move through my certifications much faster.”

AccelerateMS, a statewide workforce and economic program and a key funding partner for the VR initiative, underscored how modern training tools strengthen Mississippi’s workforce pipeline.

“Our partnership with Ingalls Shipbuilding demonstrates exactly what we aim to accomplish across the state, focusing on funding modern, scalable workforce solutions that open doors for Mississippians,” said Courtney Taylor, executive director of AccelerateMS. “Ingalls is setting a national example of how advanced training tools can transform both learning outcomes and career opportunities.”

As demand for highly skilled craft workers continues to grow, Ingalls has plans to continue expanding access to VR welding and pursue additional VR-based training opportunities across other trades. The VR welding program remains a cornerstone of Ingalls’ workforce development strategy, supporting new hires, apprentices and experienced craftsmen as they build and deliver the critical ships our U.S. Navy needs.

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