

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

Vol. 2 | Issue 4 | Fall 2018

Safety at the IBEW's Core

Since the union's earliest days, one of the IBEW's top objectives has been "to promote reasonable methods of work." It's little wonder that our founders considered this a priority: In 1891, safety standards were scarce, and electrical workers were dying on the job at twice the rate of workers in other fields. Back then, when it came to safety, no one else was looking out for our safety.

Over the past 127 years, working people have made great progress, in part because unions like the IBEW have pushed for legal standards and best practices in workplace safety. We value safety so much here at the IBEW that we placed the word atop the five values of our union's Code of Excellence, ahead of *Professionalism*, *Accountability*, *Responsibility*, and *Quality*.

WORKING SAFE IS CRUCIAL

In 2016:

- » **5,190 workers died on the job in the U.S.** (*U.S. Department of Labor*)
- » **905 workers died on the job in Canada** (*Assoc. of Workers' Compensation Boards*)

Hard-won safety regulations, along with technological improvements, have improved safety standards at the local, state, provincial, and federal levels. But unfortunately, enforcement too often can fall victim to political pres-



ures. Over the past year in the U.S., for example, a rule requiring employers to keep accurate records of workplace injuries was rolled back, and the number of Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspectors was slashed nearly 10 percent in 2017.

In that kind of environment, it's critical that we continue to take the initiative to make sure all our IBEW sisters and brothers go home safely at the end of the day. And there are plenty of examples where IBEW locals are taking the lead to keep members safe.

With underground line work becoming increasingly common, Chicago Local 9 members collaborated with signatory contractor Aldridge Electric to design and build a mobile, state-of-the-art trailer to safely train workers across the country.

For years, laws in almost every U.S. and Canadian jurisdiction have re-

quired motorists to slow down and move at least one lane away from emergency personnel working on roadway incidents. Thanks in part to persistent lobbying by IBEW activists—most recently, by Seattle Local 77—more than 30 states now extend the same protection to linemen and other utility workers.

That's the IBEW difference. Our members and leaders know that working safely helps prevent deaths and serious injuries on the job; and, with or without regulations, we can never afford to let down our guard. While it can be tempting to take shortcuts and skip steps, IBEW members demonstrate the Code of Excellence by following safety procedures to the letter. It's what keeps us and our union sisters and brothers safe on the job. And there's nothing more important than that.



What does SPARQ mean to you? Have an idea for the newsletter? Email theSPARQ@ibew.org



Keep It Simple and Safe

America's warships are built to triumph over any danger. But for the workers who build those ships, the dangers begin in the shipyard.

Working on ships and submarines is no easy task. Rooms are tight, cranes are massive and wire and fiber-optic run hundreds of feet long. While the room to maneuver is small, the margin for error is smaller. The stakes are enormously high for the women and men who will rely on the IBEW's work.

Historically, shipbuilding has taken a terrible toll on its workers, and today the IBEW and its Metal Trades sisters



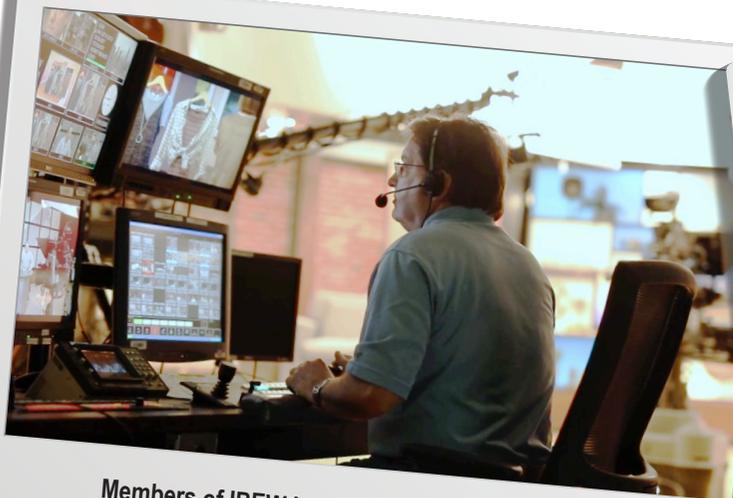
and brothers still fight for safer conditions. But now, the most common injuries on the job are often within the power of the individual to avoid.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the most common shipyard workplace injuries are, in order, overexertion, slips, trips and falls, transportation incidents and exposure to harmful substances or environments. There can be systemic causes for these kinds of injuries. Insufficient manpower, poor working conditions and unrealistic targets, for example, can force workers into dangerous situations where overexertion is a real risk. In these cases, the first action should be contacting your steward.

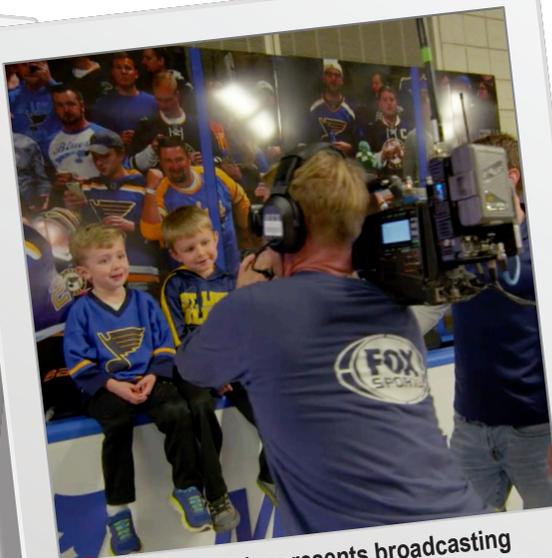
But poor decisions about something as simple as staying hydrated or a lapse of concentration while moving something heavy can be prevented by a safety-conscious worker. Proper maintenance and use of personal protective equipment, following communications protocols and taking the time to keep the workspace clean are all ways to avoid dangerous situations.

Craftsmanship and excellence are not just having skills other people lack. It is a mix of doing the very difficult easily and doing the very simple consistently.

SPARQ GOES LOCAL



Members of IBEW Local 4 in St. Louis believe the Code of Excellence is improving their jobs and local union.



IBEW Local 4 represents broadcasting professionals throughout the St. Louis region, including camera operators, news videographers and assignment editors.