

# The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

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## 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](mailto:theSPARQ@ibew.org)



## Spreading the Code

The Code of Excellence increases safety standards for electrical workers, and because of the work of Milwaukee Local 494, it now does the same for sisters and brothers in other trades as well.

Before the electrical contract was bid for the 1.1 million-square-foot Northwestern Mutual Tower on Lake Michigan, IBEW Local 494 gave a presentation to the Gilbane Building Company about using the Code of Excellence on the job.

Gilbane executives were so taken with the idea that they asked the Milwaukee Building & Construction Trades Council to bring all the trades' excellence programs together under a single document—the Code of Distinction. Soon, each trade person became accountable to his or her own organization, and a culture of construction safety became front and center.

Five signatory contractors won the contract and split the

work. Every member working the job obtained Code certification at monthly classes.

The trade-wide initiative became so valuable that Gilbane requested that the Code of Excellence and the Code of Distinction be implemented on its other construction sites,

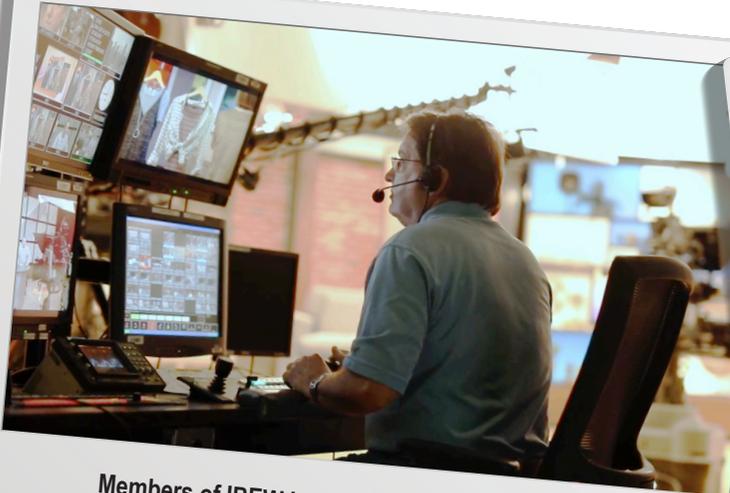
including the new Foxconn manufacturing complex in Mount Pleasant, Wisconsin. Not only is the \$10-billion project the largest in the history of the state, it is one of the largest foreign economic investments ever on American soil. The electrical work on the first building went to signatory contractor Pieper Electric.

The word spread: The Code of Distinction was part of the

project labor agreement for the Potawatomi Hotel & Casino Project Phase II and the new Milwaukee Bucks arena. The successes with safety and the Code of Excellence put IBEW members in a position to excel. Now, the IBEW is forging further ahead and writing the next chapter in its history.



## 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.