

# 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)



## Safety Surges at Wisconsin Companies With COE

Workers building transformers at SPX in Wisconsin feel safer than ever on the job, emboldened by the Code of Excellence to speak up and confident that management is listening.

It's part of an evolution that began in 2005, when workers who were fed up with empty promises, no raises, and ever-changing work rules enthusiastically joined Milwaukee Local 2150. Many things quickly changed for the better, but not safety. The low point came in 2014, when ambulances were called three times in five days for injured workers.

Local 2150 knew it was time to roll out the Code of Excellence, which it helped design. Finally, members had a voice in protecting themselves and their coworkers. "They were no longer afraid or ashamed to point out unsafe practices and conditions," Local 2150 Business Agent Jim Meyer said. "Management and the union had the same goal: for everyone to go home healthy at the end of each day."

One aspect of the Code is the Close Call program. Members who spot hazards or have ideas to improve safety fill out cards, which a union-management team review monthly. More than 300 feedback cards were submitted in

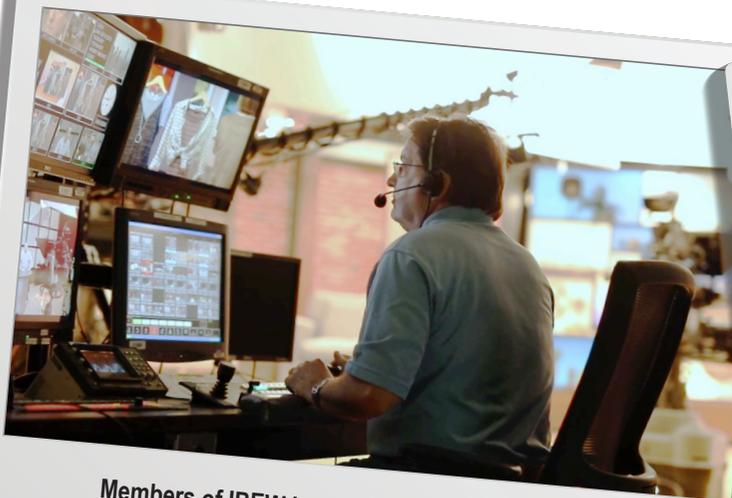


the first half of 2018. "Members are involved in the whole process, from the concern to the solution, and results are shared with the shop floor," Meyer said.

The Code of Excellence is also making a difference for Local 2150 members at Thomas Industries in Sheboygan. "Prior to the COE, it was rare to have two weeks go by without some form of recordable accident," Meyer said. "Since the Code's culture change, Thomas was able to go 600-plus days without a lost-time accident."

Thanks to the Code of Excellence, Wisconsin workers are safer and more productive. That's a win-win for IBEW members and employers.

## 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.