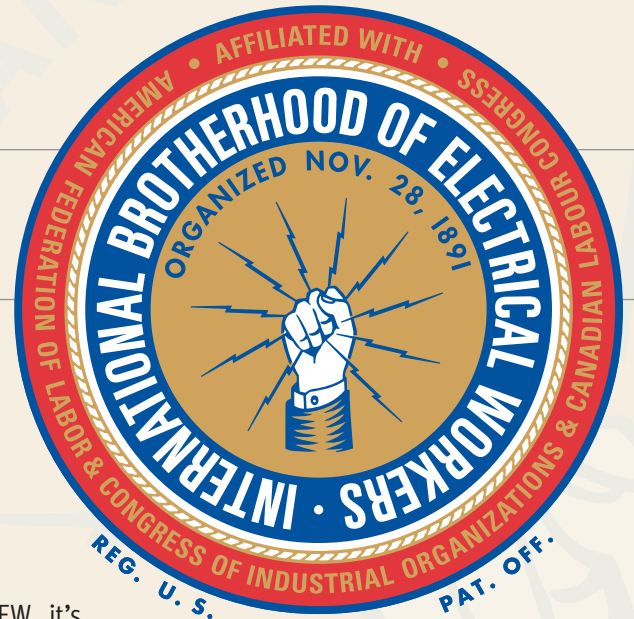


## PROTECTING AN ICON THE IBEW LOGO



*It's a symbol of Brotherhood; of more than 130 years' history of working people joining together to secure fair wages, good benefits and a dignified retirement; and it's a symbol of the IBEW's commitment to its members and its members' commitment to their union.*

But the IBEW logo, the clenched fist holding 10 lightning bolts — one for each of the union's founders — is also a commercial image.

For each and every member who wears it proudly, the logo stands for excellence, and that's why IBEW leadership needs your help to protect it.

"The IBEW's logo is important to all of us, and it stands for quality, tradition and excellence," said International President Kenneth W. Cooper. "Unfortunately, it turns up in a lot of places that stand for exactly the opposite, and it's becoming harder for us to police its use."

Popular sites like Amazon, Etsy, eBay and Shopify have enabled an explosion of non-sanctioned products to find consumers, and the IBEW's logo has been emblazoned on everything from belt buckles to casket liners. But most of the vendors on those sites have no connection to the union and paste the logo on low-quality or offensive items to make a quick buck at your expense. Unfortunately, that sometimes goes for members using the logo without authorization as well.

Support Services Director David Salazar is the man tasked with protecting the logo, and he and his staff have seen some truly bizarre applications over the years.

"We've had the fist and lightning bolts show up on high-fashion clothing, in music videos, on toys and album covers," he said. "Most of the time, it's the usual stuff — T-shirts, hats, commemorative items — but people are creative. They're stealing, but they're creative."

**By rule, only the IBEW can authorize use of the logo, and staff works hard to ensure it's used on union-made items produced in the U.S. or Canada,** and that's where much of the trouble arises.

"Most of the people out there using the IBEW's logo without our permission don't care whether it's pictured on cheap junk imported from overseas or whether it's made in a sweatshop by people making a dollar a day," Salazar said.

Sometimes, he said, they try to change an element or two — which hand is depicted or how many lightning bolts there are — but the law protects the trademark for anything deemed "confusingly similar."

"Basically, if you glance at something and think it's connected

to the IBEW, it's considered confusingly similar and we can put a stop to it."

That goes for offensive imagery as well. "You wouldn't believe some of the stuff we've seen the logo used with," Salazar said. "I can only say I don't want those things to reflect on any IBEW member, and I don't think the overwhelming majority of us would want that either."

It also applies to marketing and advertising materials. "Companies looking to do businesses with IBEW locals or members often think they can use our logo, but 100 percent of the time, that's false," Salazar said. "Whether it's insurance companies, law firms, tool manufacturers or any other business, **we don't allow the IBEW logo to go on any advertising materials at all.**"

**Local unions and signatory employers are typically the only organizations approved to use the IBEW logo or variations,** and those requests must come through the International Office for approval. Locals can request its use for products like T-shirts and hats or for use on outdoor signs, stationary, in publications or on websites, **so long as the local number is displayed prominently alongside it.**

In most instances, the local sends a letter requesting permission from the International Secretary-Treasurer and those requests are reviewed. In some districts, locals are asked to send requests through their International Vice President's office. Salazar suggests checking with your local's international representative if you're unsure.

"This logo is a source of pride for us who've dedicated our working lives to the IBEW," he said. "I wish we didn't have to worry about people using it illegally, but there are so many ways to make a dollar with our trademarks, we've got to be vigilant."

That goes for all of us, Cooper said. "We need every single member's help in protecting the symbol of our Brotherhood. It's important to all of us, and each of us has a role to play in defending it."

*If you see unauthorized use of the IBEW logo or any variation of the fist and lightning bolts, please contact your local union with website links, photos or other documentation. ■*