

# 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*.



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.

### 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-



What does SPARQ mean to you? Have an idea for the newsletter? Email [theSPARQ@ibew.org](mailto:theSPARQ@ibew.org)



## Taking the Lead in Safety

Legendary Formula 1 driver Jackie Stewart once said, “It takes leadership to improve safety.”

Thanks to his long career in a sport where cars’ speeds can reach 220 miles per hour, Stewart has been acutely aware of how preparation and training can help minimize injuries and fatalities. He successfully campaigned for improved racing safety, better medical facilities and racetrack improvements. This didn’t make Stewart very popular with track owners and race organizers who complained of the costs, but those safety standards are now the norm in racing.

In the same way, the IBEW’s Code of Excellence provides railroad branch members an opportunity to take a cue from Stewart and take the lead in helping to ensure a safe work environment.

Before any work starts, everyone meets and reviews potential workplace risks. Vigilance in this regard is crucial, whether watching out for equipment rolling slowly through rail yards or for Amtrak’s 560-ton Acela racing by at 150 miles per hour.

IBEW members never assume that there will be a warning about ap-

proaching equipment. They know the dangers well, and they always listen for audible signals and telltale sounds of nearby locomotives or rail cars.

The strict safety rules that govern rail work, the regulations of a railroad property or agency, and the various training requirements are all communicated to, and followed by, every railroad worker.

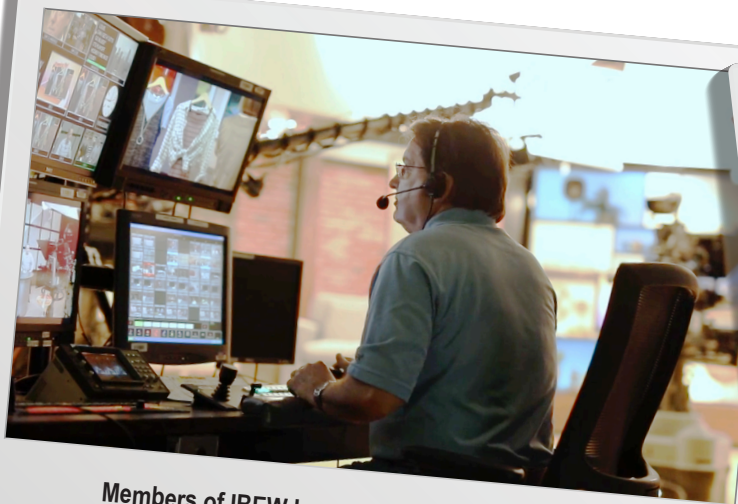
IBEW railroad workers demonstrate safety in everything they do. When working with overhead cranes, they con-

firm that the work area’s conditions and weight loads are adequate. They ensure that their gloves are officially certified for working with high voltages. They know to keep clear of deadly “third rails” and overhead catenary lines. No safety standard is too insignificant to be given critical attention.

The Code of Excellence means that, no matter what, members and supervisors can work together to provide safety precautions and proper communication. As the saying goes, “We must respect the past, and mistrust the present, if we wish to provide for the safety of the future.”



## 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.