

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

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The Importance and Benefits of Accountability

When your company spreads across some 60 sites and seven states, holding people accountable can seem almost impossible; that is, unless you have the IBEW and the Code of Excellence.

The Tennessee Valley Authority employs approximately 2,500 IBEW members as permanent employees at its worksites that include nuclear, solar, hydroelectric and oil and gas plants. Thousands more work in a short-term capacity upgrading infrastructure and performing maintenance work.

The TVA has long been proud of its relationship with labor, but by partnering with the IBEW and implementing its Code of Excellence, it's made that relationship even stronger. And the partnership is bringing in workers from other trades, making this a multi-trade initiative that shines a light on the importance of accountability.

Surveys have shown that 91 percent of employees who feel valued at their job are motivated to do their best, compared to 37 percent who don't feel valued.

When Tenth District International Vice President Brent Hall began discussions with TVA about the Code, he pointed to the previous success of Florida Power & Light when it



implemented the program. Part of its success came from empowering lower-level union and management representatives to resolve problems.

By empowering people at this level, it sends a message of trust and appreciation, which in turn creates a culture where everyone feels valued—and accountable—to one another. It also creates a sense of ownership. In other words, it fosters a culture of positive peer pressure.

“It's been our experience that when you have onsite labor relations, with mid-level management and the union working together at that site, the problems don't end up downtown,” Hall said. “It's better for management, and it gives workers a voice in the decision-making. It's not some mandate from some office in some building far away.”

At a place as vast and varied as TVA, this becomes particularly valuable.

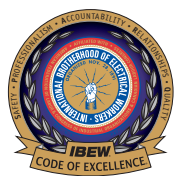
“Each site has its own specific issues,” Hall said. “A plant manager may be fine letting his guys have a say, except that he's handcuffed by some company-wide letter. We're trying to get back to letting management and local union representatives fix their problems at home.”

Of course, none of this takes the place of top-level leadership. And some things will always have to be handled at a higher level. But by giving people on-site power to handle more issues, they're also allowed more ownership. And that ownership translates to accountability, an essential part of the Code of Excellence.

Whether you work at a sprawling site like TVA, or a small, mom-and-pop shop, accountability matters. It's a way of allowing people to show they're responsible, which in turn makes every worksite, and worker, better.



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



Award-Winning Accountability

For Emmy-Award-winner Neil McCaffrey, accountability was always a cornerstone on the job and while representing his fellow broadcasting members at New York Local 1212.

“It’s everything,” said McCaffrey who retired in late 2018 after a 45-year career as a CBS cameraman. “CBS has always been looked to as the ‘Tiffany Network,’ and the reason is because of the quality of work done by the men and women of the IBEW along with the rest of the company. We work together.”

McCaffrey worked everything from presidential inaugurations to the Super Bowl to the Masters golf tournament. The Vietnam War veteran won five Emmy Awards for his work as lead cameraman on the Daytona 500.

When he started at CBS in 1974, McCaffrey worked a camera for “Guiding Light,” the long-running soap opera that was televised live at the time. He served alongside longtime CBS employees who were among the company’s original camera personnel.

“I didn’t know anything,” he said. “They took me in and shaped me in a professional capacity.”

He’s done the same with others throughout his career, serving as a shop steward and chairman of the sports committee during negotiations between CBS and the IBEW.

“He has been a great supporter of the union and was invaluable in negotiations,” said International Representative Neil Ambrosio, who McCaffrey mentored along the way. “There’s no other person I would rather go into battle with than Neil McCaffrey.”

Throughout his career, McCaffrey showed through his character and his quality work that being accountable to your colleagues, to your employer, and most importantly, to yourself, pays off in reputation, respect and, occasionally, with prestigious awards.



SPARQ GOES LOCAL



Sheffield, Ala., Local 558 demonstrated its commitment to the IBEW’s core principles with Code of Excellence training in February.



Local 558 Business Manager Tony Quillen spoke to construction members about the Code and its benefits.