

# The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

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## Leading the Way on Quality

New York City Local 3 journeyman wireman John Murphy faced a competitive acceptance process when he applied for adventurous electrical work at Antarctica's McMurdo research station. But the contractor immediately recognized that Murphy's IBEW membership set him apart from other applicants and moved his name to the top of the pile.

"It definitely gives you a leg up," Murphy said. "It tells them that you meet a certain criterion. That streamlined it for me."

More than anything else, it's the quality of our work—embodied in the Code of Excellence—that gives employers the assurance that IBEW workers will get the job done the right way, the first time.

"It makes sense that 'quality' is the final piece of the Code's SPARQ acronym," International President Lonnie R. Stephenson said. "Because when you add up all the other components—safety, professionalism, accountability and relationships—quality is the logical result."

When the Minnesota Twins wanted to build a new baseball stadium in Minneapolis a few years ago, former president Jerry Bell insisted on having union electricians work on what eventually became Target Field. "You get the best quality that way," Bell said. "You have people who are experienced. The craftsmanship in this ballpark is second to none in the major leagues."



IBEW quality comes from our first-class training and mentoring, not just during our apprenticeships but throughout our careers. It's affirmation of the hard work we've put in, and a guarantee that employers and customers get what they pay for.

You see our commitment to quality in the experienced instructors combining top-notch classroom education with hands-on guidance at our

**"Training programs affiliated with the labor movement have a combined budget of over \$1.5 billion and are the second-largest providers of workplace training in the United States, after the U.S. military."**

—Liz Shuler, AFL-CIO executive secretary and member of Portland, Ore., IBEW Local 125

NECA-IBEW training centers across North America. You see it through our investment in the National Utility Industry Training Fund, or when our telecommunications members take advantage of the latest NACTEL courses. And you witness it every day on the job, when experienced members take the time to share their skills with the next generation.

We understand that sharing our knowledge solidifies our well-earned reputation for quality, which helps us grow our market share as we gain and retain customers.

"Our customers and contractors have come to expect quality work from IBEW members, and it's easy to understand why," Stephenson said. "Our Code of Excellence is what makes all the difference."



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



# Quality Shines in Flammable Situations

Petroleum products may be the only things worse than water to mix with electricity. And at the BP refinery in Whiting, Ind.—the global behemoth's largest refinery anywhere in the world—17 million gallons of crude oil are processed every day.

So, when BP needed a \$300 million upgrade to the sulfur-removal equipment last year, the quality needed to be flawless. The plant couldn't slow down to accommodate the work, and the members of Gary and Hammond, Ind., Local 697 and signatory contractor M.J. Electric had to figure out how to handle the extreme challenges the worksite posed.

Local 697 Business Manager Ryan Reithel knew something special was needed for the project. The schedule was tight, worker density high, tolerances extreme and coordination with plant engineers and other trades was demanding even for the IBEW's high standards.

So Reithel turned to the Code of Excellence, hosting a management presentation for the contractors. He explained the importance of the SPARQ system for everyone onsite, given the extensive use of Building Information Modeling and prefabrication for the 112,000 feet of conduit, 9,000 feet of cable tray, 1,200 instruments, 500,000

feet of wire and cable and 66,000 feet of heat trace.

When project delays hit the job, the superior coordination, planning and workmanship of Local 697 members allowed them to smoothly shift to prefabrication work. Members stayed onsite and productive, turning out



high-quality work even as other parts of the job lagged behind schedule.

The Code of Excellence is a promise, but execution is where reputations are made. The true measure of quality is that production at the plant never slowed, electricity and jet fuel never mixed and both the contractor and the customer saw the high level of craftsmanship IBEW members are capable of.

## SPARQ GOES LOCAL



NTI attendees take part in hands-on training.



Participants attend the 2019 NTI Graduation Ceremony.



NTI graduates stand proudly in front of Hill Auditorium at the University of Michigan.

Quality begins with training, and the National Training Institute (NTI) is key to making sure that IBEW apprenticeship instructors are the best. This year marked the electrical training ALLIANCE's 30th NTI, which included more than 2,100 participants.