

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

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Safety: The “S” in SPARQ

As IBEW members, our commitment to excellence is core to who we are and key to distinguishing ourselves from the competition. You know about our Code of Excellence, and over the course of the next year, we'll use this quarterly newsletter to talk in a little more detail about what that means.

For us, the Code's values are embodied in the acronym, SPARQ: Safety, Professionalism, Accountability, Relationships and Quality. Together, these values provide the framework for excellence and guide our approach to every day on the job.

Our first issue focuses on staying safe on the job. The early days of the electrical industry were filled with stories of linemen dying or suffering horrible injuries at work. That's why our founding fathers banded together to bargain for safer working conditions, and safety remains a core part of our mission today.

The IBEW awarded 21 members Life-Saving Awards in 2016. Thank you to those members who helped save lives and put safety first.

While members in 2017 work a wider variety of jobs than they did in 1891, for many of us, attention to safety could still be the difference between coming home at the end of the



“When you do your job right, our employer notices, when you're the safest and most professional, the customer notices, and when you do both, everyone notices.” International President Lonnie R. Stephenson

day or not. It takes constant focus, attention to detail and adherence to workplace rules to ensure we make decisions that prioritize our own safety and the well-being of those around us.

At Local 37 in Fredericton, New Brunswick, safety and excellence are an essential part of the local's fabric. Last December, after a series of roundtables with members about what the Code meant to members, leadership distributed individual cards and workplace posters promoting the Code of Excellence.

They labeled safety the local's “number one priority,” and members have taken it to heart. At New Brunswick Power, which employs about 90 per-

cent of Local 37's members, safety has become so engrained that the company and its IBEW employees were awarded Canada's Best Health and Safety Culture for 2016.

“Being recognized for our commitment to safety is an enormous honor,” said Business Manager Ross Galbraith. “But the real reward is knowing that we're looking out for our brothers and sisters on the job and that our culture of safety is preventing injuries. There's nothing more important than that.”

Keep reading to learn more about how you can make a personal commitment to safety on and off the job.



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



Making Safety Pay

There is an old martial arts saying that slow is smooth and smooth is fast. A similar idea has been catching on in the construction industry about safety: safe is smooth and smooth is profitable.

For decades, contractors fought safety standards because they believed they hurt the bottom line. Many, unfortunately, still believe and act on this idea now.

But the highest safety standards are not a wall to success; they are a gateway to it.

It used to be through negotiations and the grievance procedures that safety standards would rise. But today, safety standards built on the best research and using modern techniques and equipment keep our members whole and turbocharge productivity.

The IBEW has a partner in our signatory contractors and we often find ourselves responding to the owners' needs and requirements of a safe workplace.

The best examples can be drawn from more than a decade of Code of Excellence jobs because they highlight the necessity of joint commitment by the workers and supervisors to jobsite safety rules. One without the other inevitably fails.

Clear and open lines of communication between workers, foremen and management about changing conditions and expectations will always deliver the most bang for the buck.

Sometimes keeping workers safe requires expensive equipment and extended timeframes. Sometimes all it takes is an ongoing conversation.

Finally, as the work moves forward, every person on a jobsite needs to understand that their duty is not to a deadline but to their brother and sister. The Code of Excellence has been a crucial tool in giving everyone the power to slow things down, because sometimes careful is smooth and smooth is safe.



SPARQ GOES LOCAL



When Entergy's Arkansas Nuclear One plant fell to the lowest rating from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Code of Excellence helped the plant return to safety and success.



Chelsea, Mass., Local 1499 and Milwaukee Local 2150 used the Code of Excellence as a selling point to bring overseas business back to the U.S. and increased membership along the way.