

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



Protecting Yourself is Job No. 1

Members of the IBEW's railroad branch don't need to be told why safety is important. A 200-ton locomotive is all the reminder they'll ever need.

But the inherent dangers of working around rolling stock make sticking to universally-recognized safety protocols all the more important. That's why blue flag/blue light protection procedures can't be ignored, even for a quick fix. It means throwing switches as well to direct any approaching equipment onto another track and ensuring that derails, blue flags and blue lights are applied at least 150 feet before entering a work zone.

When working on or around moving equipment, it's critical that you notify locomotive engineers of the need for red zone protection and then wait for that instruction to be acknowledged before setting foot on a piece of rolling

stock. That extra second or two for the engineer to center the reverser and apply the brakes could be the difference

between life and death. For yourself, your family and your brothers and sisters on the job, it's worth the wait.

Personal protective equipment is your last line of defense. Hard hats, safety glasses, respirators, whatever a particular job requires, aren't optional. If the company hasn't provided you with the necessary PPE or asks you to do something you feel is unsafe, it's your job to speak up. Your stew-

ards and local union will be there to make sure you're not punished for voicing your concerns.

If you stick to these safety protocols and remember that your first job is to protect yourself and your co-workers, you'll be living out the first principle of the IBEW's Code of Excellence.



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.