

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.

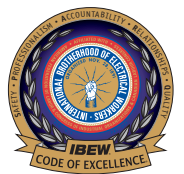
“Each site has its own specific issues,” Hall said. “A plant manager may be fine letting his guys have a say, except that he's handcuffed by some company-wide letter. We're trying to get back to letting management and local union representatives fix their problems at home.”

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



Accountability Reigns in Uncertain Times

The recent partial shutdown of the U.S. federal government meant that 800,000 employees and 400,000 contractors were furloughed. But not all of them stayed home: Nearly 420,000 men and women, including thousands of IBEW members, were required to show up to work as usual—without pay—during the historic 35-day funding lapse. If that's not accountability, nothing is.

“We didn't know it would last so long,” said IBEW Government Employees Department Director Paul O'Connor. “It looked like it could go on and on forever, and it takes a pretty strong-willed individual to go through all that without a paycheck in sight.”

As members of IBEW's government branch, we understand that millions of people depend on us to do our jobs. It's our accountability—to taxpayers, to the mission of our agencies, to one another—that makes us stand out. Even when politi-

cians make us pawns in their political brinksmanship, we know accountability is central to our Code of Excellence.

Employers in the public and private sectors alike understand that they can count on IBEW members to accept all of the various responsibilities that come with our jobs, even when it means making sacrifices and hard choices.

Our furloughed sisters and brothers pressed on during the shutdown to keep critical work uninterrupted because accountability means supporting our employers, taxpayers and our fellow workers no matter what, even if it didn't seem fair to be asked to do so.

From shipyards to government offices to national laboratories, our members soldiered on, because regardless of what we're expected to do, IBEW members demonstrate our commitment to the Code every day through our accountability to the citizens we serve, to each other and to ourselves.



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.