

# 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](mailto:theSPARQ@ibew.org)



# Accountability Could Save Your Job

Accountability isn't just a buzzword for our telecommunications members. It's essential in a competitive environment. In return, we expect it from our partners and employers. Our members know that accountability is key to our jobs.

It shows in the relationship that Boise, Idaho, Local 291 has with AT&T, the owner of DirecTV, where most of the local's telecommunications members are employed.

Members have the right to appeal any disciplinary action by the company, including termination. A panel comprised of representatives from management and the union hears those appeals.

AT&T understands that IBEW members demand a lot of themselves. It understands that sometimes good employees make mistakes and deserve another chance. The company has been compassionate and thoughtful in nearly every case. We haven't always agreed, but both sides embrace the concept of accountability.

Approximately 80 percent of Local 291 members who appealed a dismissal have kept their jobs at the end of the process. Better yet, the union reports a 100-percent-success rate of the employees allowed to return. Not a single worker has failed to meet the rigorous standards that are often part of a final opportunity.

"We're bringing a Code of Excellence mindset into a contractual right," Local 291 telecommunications representative Jason Taylor said.

The nearly 300 technicians and agents represented by Local 291 were proud to be featured in an IBEW Code of Excellence video. Many of them had no idea what a union could do for them just a few years ago. Now, they take pride in their IBEW membership.

Agreements like these are possible because IBEW sisters and brothers hold themselves—and each other—accountable with the Code of Excellence. Keep up the great work.



## 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.