

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

Vol. 4 | Issue 2 | Spring 2020

We Are the Power Professionals

IBEW members do our best every day because we're professionals to the core, not because it leads to awards or accolades. But when we are recognized, it's worth celebrating. After all, it's an acknowledgment of our commitment to being the best in the business.

Every year, *Power Magazine* scours the globe to find the best, most efficient and most advanced gas power plants in the world for their annual awards issue. Last year, the editors honored the Wolverine Power Cooperative's 432-megawatt Alpine gas plant in Elmira, Mich., for a record-breaking reliability record.

The plant is not only one of the most reliable in the nation; Alpine's owners say it is the most efficient in their fleet. And IBEW members don't just run the plant—they built it. The \$166-million project began in 2015 and used only union trades. Signatory contractor Swan Electric hired members of Traverse City, Mich., Local 498 for all the substation, power line and construction work that brought the plant to life.

It nearly goes without saying that the project came in on time and on budget.

"I speak for all of us at Alpine when I say we are proud of the work we do to serve our members," said Grand Rapids, Mich., Local 876 member and Chief Plant Operator Dan Boulter. "When people come to our



plant, we take pride in our ownership of its performance and appearance. We take care of everything inside this gate, from cleaning the toilets to troubleshooting our emissions control system."

In recognition of that commitment to professionalism, Wolverine puts the names of the workers who run Alpine on a plaque out front.

Boulter said that while they do nearly all the work themselves—nearly 95 percent of the plant's work orders are for preventative/predictive maintenance—he may be proudest of what he hears from his peers in the industry, the traveling millwrights that work outages and do upgrades all

across the region and see into dozens of plants.

"We like when the millwrights come to the plant and say, 'We don't usually see a plant this clean.' Or, 'We are treated great around here,'" Boulter said. "It's good sign when they tell you, 'When you need help, we want to come back.'"

It's that kind of professionalism and pride from IBEW members—in all branches—that sets our members apart from the competition. With the Code of Excellence as our guide, it's the kind of performance that every day earns us the moniker "The Power Professionals."



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



Years Later, a Professionalism Primer Sticks

A valuable lesson about professionalism on the job has stuck with lineman Josh Perry for nearly 15 years.

Now a unit chairman, shop steward and crew leader with Atlanta Local 84, Perry was about a year into his lineman apprenticeship at the time.

“I was working a pole and I was about to do something that I was pretty sure wasn’t the preferred method, but it was quick and easy,” he recalled—leaving in the past what

that “something” might have been.

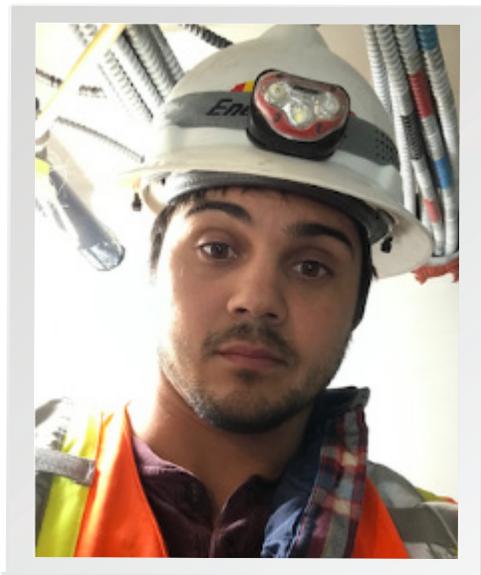
Perry’s youthful justification also was one of the oldest: “I’d seen it done by someone else before.”

Keeping an eye on things from the ground in that Clarkesville, Ga., neighborhood was Dickie Edwards, the trouble-man on the crew. Edwards hollered up to Perry to stop him, and then asked the apprentice to come down for a chat.

“He talked to me about the importance of following the rules and procedures,” Perry said. Not just because IBEW members get paid to do the job right, Edwards told him, but also because “our reputation for professionalism follows us everywhere we go.”

What really grabbed Perry was the lead lineman’s professional approach. “He drove home the point about working safe and making sure that you and everyone you work with go home every day the same way you came in,” Perry said. “I could tell he was trying to help me and not just chew me out.”

These days, Perry sometimes takes his own apprentices to that very pole to impress upon them the importance of professionalism and safety. “I think about Dickie’s professionalism often, and I hope I’ve been able to pass it on to others,” he said.



Justin Long, Apprentice Wireman
San Luis Obispo, Calif., Local 639

Professionalism From Day One

“I do not believe I could have learned the necessary skills for the electrical industry without the guidance of the IBEW apprenticeship program.

Without a professional apprenticeship, working in the electrical industry is extremely dangerous and I would not feel safe on the jobsite without the supervision of a journeyman and classroom instruction.

My apprenticeship is my ticket to the middle class.”

Share your IBEW story for a chance to be included in an upcoming issue of *The Electrical Worker* (IBEW.org/MyIBEWStory).