

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



There are Always Risks, but the Job Can be Done Safely

Everyday assignments for an IBEW utility worker can involve dangers the average worker would never see once: great heights, terrible weather and live wires.

But on-the-job hazards can be handled safely—if we apply our specialized training with a good dose of common sense.

First, no matter how simple a job looks, take the time to assess and discuss the hazards involved. A 5-10 minute pre-job briefing could mean life or death.

Every member of the crew should understand their role and the goal. No one should be confused about their job if something unexpected happens.

If the job involves any kind of excavation, making sure underground hazards have been located and properly marked is required.

Once the job is clear to everyone, and potential risks

identified, tools and equipment should be matched to the work, especially clothing and PPE. Then, use all of it fully and correctly.

If you have questions about the sufficiency of the PPE, get an answer before getting to work.



Often the biggest danger only comes from the most experienced and best trained workers: complacency. If you look around and think you've seen it all before, you are setting yourself up for an accident or worse, especially when doing emergency work.

When the time pressure is on and the conditions are challenging, be especially observant for unknown hazards. Do your best to assess the "what if's" of every situation and constantly come up with plans that allow you to stay safe, no matter what happens.

Excellence isn't just keeping the system running, it's getting everyone home 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.