

Here are some answers to Frequently Asked Questions about Organizing. Click a particular question or scroll down to review the whole list:

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What is a Union?

A Union is an organization of workers who join together for a common purpose, for mutual aid and protection, to engage in concerted activity and collective bargaining, ultimately to elevate our conditions of life and labor. A union is an organization by which ordinary people do extraordinary things. It is a means by which individual workers, who are vulnerable to the indignities heaped upon them by powerful employers, organize and transform themselves into a powerful and cohesive force to remake their world!

What is a Union?

YOU DO! YOU elect your own local union officers. YOU run your own local union affairs. YOU have your own negotiating committee. YOU make the decision on your own union contract. YOU have your own shop stewards. YOU decide important policies and actions of your own union by majority vote. YOU elect your international officers. YOU elect your own delegates to the international conventions. YOU - the membership - are the final voice of authority and decision in your Union. Our union exists for one and only one major reason - the good of our members. Our union, the IBEW, accomplishes as a unit what we cannot accomplish as individuals. The IBEW cares about You and Your Family!

What is a Union?

Will I have to take a back seat to all of the existing Union members as far as work opportunities and will the "Union Boss" tell me which jobs I have to take? Not only is this a myth, it is against the law. Local 505 has a nondiscriminatory job referral procedure that is bound by the National Labor Relations Act. The person who signs the out-of-work list first is given first choice of job referrals. There is no seniority policy and no one has to take a job they do not want.

What is a Union?

Why should I pay part of my hard earned wages toward Union dues? Where it may seem to some that this would be an insurmountable question and that there is no good reason to justify the payment of dues, the answer is really quite simple. Every household, business firm, social or civic organization, church or government body requires financial support to carry out its functions and responsibilities. Similarly, labor unions need financial resources to conduct their affairs. Without adequate financial means, it would be impossible for our international union and our local unions to represent the members of our organization properly. The many kinds of services that labor unions provide require financial resources. Contract negotiating, grievance and arbitration handling, representing the interest of our members before the various levels of government, organizing the unorganized, and many other functions all require sufficient funding if our union is to represent our interests adequately in society as a whole and the work place in particular. Therefore, we, as members, have an obligation to recognize that our organization must have adequate financial support if we are going to be effective in representing our interests. As members of the IBEW, we also have a vote in determining the amount of dues the membership pays. In return for these dues and service fees, what do the members get? In addition to what is mentioned above, they get a guaranteed hourly pay rate on their checks, pension plans, family medical coverage (which is fully paid for by the contractor), organizing which better the livelihoods of not just our members, but all the workers in the electrical industry and last, but not least, they get collective bargaining to help guarantee increased wages and benefits in the future. **Union dues are an Investment!**

What is a Union?

Will I only be able to work six months out of the year if I join the IBEW? This is a common story that is told to keep you from actively investigating the IBEW for yourself. The facts are that construction work is dependent on many factors - the national economy, local economy, interest rates, etc. The demand for construction workers varies from year to year and month to month. In the recession of the early eighties and 2009 when there was unemployment for electricians, both union and non-union, some IBEW electricians either had to live off their savings or travel to other areas to find work. But even at the worst times, one-half of Local 505 members were working at home.

Local 505 contractors are working over 400 local electricians now. These electricians enjoy the benefit of carrying the same insurance and pensions from job to job, whether they are home or working around the country. The IBEW is dedicated to establishing uniform standards and wages throughout the industry so that workers don't have to compete over wages, but get and maintain their jobs based on skill and productivity. In the union you have greater employment opportunities than an individual working nonunion. You have full access to union signatories through our referral system and, if union work locally is slow, you can travel to another local union that has work or you can work for a nonunion contractor as a union salt. **Through the Union you have the opportunity to work any job!**

What is a Union?

The contract (or agreement) is the signed document between the electrical contractor or contractors and the local union which describes terms and conditions of employment such as the following: **WAGES:** Fair rates of pay for each classification of worker, including automatic wage increases, etc. **HOURS:** Holidays, start time, quit time, overtime, shift work, etc. **CONDITIONS:** Safety and health, personal rights and treatment. **BENEFITS:** Company-paid health insurance, pensions, training, etc. Among its most important features will be an orderly system for settling disputes between employees and the company bosses. This is called a "grievance procedure" and it requires the company to go through successive steps until a satisfactory solution is found to an employee's problem. Under a written contract, nobody has to guess his rights to seek individual favors from the boss. All things are spelled out for everyone to see and understand.

For More Information Contact:
Frank Bunkley
251-476-0275
fbunkley505@aol.com