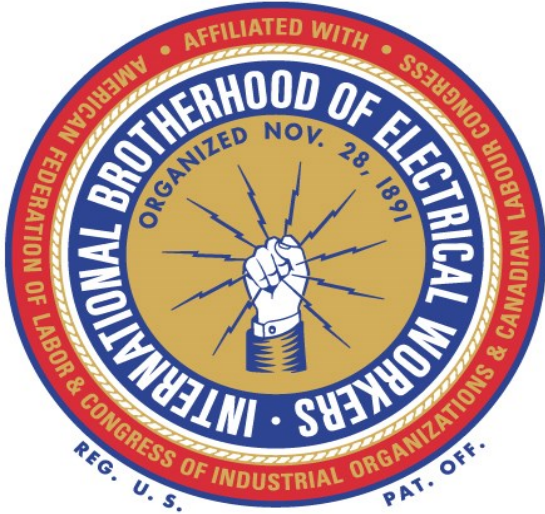


TAILGATING

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Recently we have been receiving a lot of calls from members interested in becoming an “A” member, and wanting to know what the benefits are to being an “A” member. After answering some questions at a recent unit meeting we decided to put an article together to help explain how it all works.

To go from being a “BA” to an “A” member requires you to send an email to Robin, our office manager at rkru-ger@ibew204.org. In the email state your name and that you are requesting to convert to an “A” member. Robin will then notify payroll of the Company you work for. It takes a pay period to get caught up then you should see the extra \$19/month on your payroll deducted dues, which will increase to \$20/month January 1st, 2020.

Now that we know it costs an extra \$19/month to be an “A” member let’s talk about the benefits of being an “A” member. When you retire from the IBEW, or stop paying the international dues portion, you will receive a monthly pension payment in the amount of \$4.50 for each year of service if you wait to retire from the IBEW until age 65. The early retirement age is 62. If you retire from the IBEW from age 62 to 64 you will see a reduction in your pension payment of 6.66% per year prior to age 65. If you wait until the age of 65 you will not see a reduction and receive 100% of the pension payment. If you are an “A” member and want to retire from the Company before the age of 65, but don’t want to take a hit on the pension then all you need to do is request a participating withdrawal and you will continue to pay the international portion of your dues, but no longer pay the 1% of your earnings. If you request a participating withdrawal it will be on the next monthly E-Board agenda and will be voted on for approval at that meeting.

Another benefit to being an “A” member is the death benefit. If you are current on your dues and not receiving pension from the IBEW you are eligible for a death benefit of \$6250. If you are retired and receiving pension payments then that death benefit is reduced down to \$3000. As you can see there are benefits to being an “A” member other than being able to travel into a hiring hall or work for a Contractor. Becoming an “A” member isn’t for everyone and it is up to you to sit down and pencil out whether or not there is a benefit to converting or not. One thing to remember is once you sign up to become an A member per the IBEW constitution you are required to stay an A member for 1 year. I always encourage our younger members to strongly consider becoming “A” members since the climate across a lot of the employers whose members we represent is continuously changing, and not always for the better. If you have any more questions please don’t hesitate to call the hall or go to the IBEW website at www.IBEW.org/links and look for PBF FAQ’s.

A Broken Record

I would like to talk about something that we have wrote about before, and this may sound like a broken record but it needs to be addressed, again. That something is contractors doing our work. We are constantly seeing more and more contractors on the properties our members are working on.

Recently we had a small workgroup that has never seen contractors come in and do their work, but due to the amount of work needing to be done, the inevitable happened. At first glance, it seemed to be a scheduling issue, which was the result of mismanaging of a department. As we dug deeper into why contractors are doing our work, the real issue was clear; we have too many members who do just enough to keep their job and that's about it. Working for a utility company requires putting in some extra hours when the need arises. That is why we fight hard for overtime language, work hours and conditions. If you work extra, you should be rewarded. With that being said, if there is an abundance of work, our members should be willing to step up to the plate and do that work as best as they can. If you are a foreman, you should lead by example. We understand that things come up and people have lives outside of work, but the excuse of "I don't want to travel" or "they have me for 40 hours a week and no more" doesn't benefit anyone. As a matter of fact, it makes it much harder in negotiations when we try to get more pay and better benefits. If you manage your time effectively, as we all should, there is no reason why we can't all do a little extra and be rewarded for it while balancing the home and work life. If that is what it takes to keep our work in house it shouldn't be too much to ask for.

You can guarantee there are managers in all of our contracts that would much rather see more contractors and fewer employees. They have no idea that directly and negatively impacts their careers. Numerous non-bargaining employees over the years have said we are overpaid for what little we do and that it is much easier on them to just call contractors in to do the work. They throw that in our faces frequently. Contractors don't talk back. Contractors don't complain to Company managers. They want the work and we should be fighting to keep it.

When a manager opens up unlimited overtime for more than a year to get the work done, but maybe it requires some travel around the State, you had better be stepping up and doing your fair share. If you don't, be prepared for someone else to do your work. It's a very simple concept. If someone else is doing your work you might want to ask yourself "why do they need me". Hopefully your answer matches the Company's, though we can almost be assured it won't.

Just because you are working overtime doesn't always translate into getting more work done. It doesn't benefit anyone to soak up the gravy overtime and have no return to the Company what so ever. The Company is keeping tabs on it and, once again, it will get thrown in our face when we go to the table. If you are more worried about your side business or your personal errands that it takes away from your productivity at work you might want to get out before you get fired. We have members losing their jobs who would love to have the opportunity to do your job and get your pay.

We have received a number of calls from members letting us know that the Company has contracted more work out and some to non-union contractors. Some fields don't have union contractors available. Before you call to see what we can do to keep contractors off property do your homework. Are you part of the problem or part of the solution? Do you have a solution to keep contractors off property? It makes it hard to build a case for our members to do the work when the opportunity is there but not taken. It is a bad look and it reflects poorly on all of our members, not just one department. We understand wanting to fight for our work, but we need to stand together and be able to back ourselves up with being good employees.

It all boils down to the IBEW Code of Excellence. Would you hire yourself? Are you putting your best foot forward and being the best employee you can be? We understand that it can be hard with morale in the gutter or the condition some of our employers are in, but we need to make ourselves the number one asset. That means stepping up and putting in the work, as well as doing the right thing. We truly believe that our members are the most important asset to each of the employers whose employees we represent. We need to keep it that way and not squander away more jobs because of poor work ethic or lack of pride. We would rather say that when they needed us the most we stepped up. We got the work done in house and on time, not to mention its what is best for our customers as well! In order to do that we need to be holding each other accountable and stepping up to the plate when called upon. We can do the work and we should want to do the work.

Dustin Stamma

HRA vs HSA - What's the Difference?

Do you know the difference between a Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) and a Health Savings Account (HSA)?

Each account has its own benefits and merits, and they are similar in some ways. The philosophy behind an HRA and an HSA is that they are designed to help make healthcare more affordable for workers and their families by providing financial support for health related expenses. Members and account holders can use the funds in their HRA or HSA to pay for qualified health expenses, which means the person is more involved in his or her personal healthcare since they choose how and when to spend their healthcare dollars. Also both accounts can be part of an employer-sponsored benefit plan.

The key difference between the two accounts is that an HRA is employer-owned whereas an HSA is employee-owned. **THIS MEANS AN HRA IS LEFT BEHIND WHEN AN EMPLOYEE NO LONGER WORKS FOR THAT EMPLOYER, AND THE FUNDS ARE NO LONGER ACCESSIBLE!** With an HSA the employee keeps the account and can transfer it when he or she changes jobs. Account holders may also invest their HSA funds once the account reaches a minimum threshold.

Another noteworthy difference is how each account is funded and used. The money in an HRA comes solely from the employer, therefore, the employer sets the rules for which expenses are eligible for reimbursement, such as deductibles, copays, coinsurance, and other services like dental and vision. An HSA can be funded by anyone, but contributions generally come from the employee, the employer, or both. The IRS sets the guidelines for HSA qualified expenses. Furthermore, there is an annual contribution limit for an HSA, while HRA limits, if any, vary by employer.

Then there are tax implications. Since an HRA is employer-funded, only the employer gets a tax reduction. With an HSA, an account holder makes pre-tax contributions to and earns tax-free interest on the account, and the employer gets a tax benefit for contributing, as well.

For employers, the benefits of providing an HRA or HSA are very similar, though an employer has more control over an HRA. Conversely, there is also an added administrative, record keeping need with an HRA.

Twenty three years ago when I started with Alliant Energy's predecessor company, we were a "full service company". With the exception of a few contractors in use, we did it all. Fast forward to today, we are quickly becoming a maintenance only company. In a very short time, meter reader jobs will be obsolete, while service mechanics have been told that roughly all of them are going to be eliminated.

The number of contractors doing the jobs that Alliant Energy employees can and are willing to do, needs to decrease. Do not get me wrong, I am not saying the contractors are not needed, there are circumstances that we do lack the equipment and manpower to dedicate but that is not our fault, that is the company neglecting to supply and staff what is needed. When put into these situations we must rely on the contractors. Our hands are most definitely tied in these situations, but if contractors are hired in these situations they need to be Union contractors. As the company makes these transitions, we need to remain stringent in making sure we tell our managers that we ARE willing to do the work and most definitely WANT to do the work!

Some of you may be okay with being a maintenance company, but I am not! I enjoy my job and I want to be the one out there doing the work from start to finish! Trust me, when the contractors leave, they don't worry about the quality of the work once they are gone. By doing these jobs, we stay efficient by doing the work every day and THAT saves the company money! With all the changes in procedures and EOP's, if we are not doing it every day, it is hard to retain and be the best we can be.

We as members can do a couple of things to help. We need to step up and let management know that we want to do the work. If it's absolutely necessary to hire the contractors, they need to be UNION. Let's take back our work the contractors have been doing, by making sure we are doing our own work! In most cases we are better trained and as we have been told by management, it is most definitely cheaper for the customer when we do the work ourselves. So let's do as much of our own work as possible for the customer's sake and ours!!!!

Chad Hilsabeck Unit #6

I Hope everyone has a great rest of their summer and by all means work safe and work smart!

August 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6 Unit Meeting Mason City Operating 4:00PM	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 Union Meeting Ottumwa Operating	15	16	17
18	19	20	21 Union Meeting Dubuque	22 Executive Board	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Local 204 would like to announce the appointment of our new Assistant Business Manager Brian Scott. Brian will be replacing Ron Garrett as our full time Assistant. Brian was a Plant Equipment Operator at Duane Arnold Energy Center. Brian comes with 10 years Nuclear Plant experience. Please welcome Brian and feel free to contact him at the Hall for any of your concerns.

Brian Scott

bscott@ibew204.org

319-366-3434 Office

319-777-6459 Cell

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IBEW, Local 204
4837 1st Ave SE, Suite 203
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402-3226

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