

President's Page



JOSEPH HUNT
General President

“We are a proud craft filled with tradition and honor. Never forget that part of that tradition is working hard and looking out for each other, but perhaps the most important part is delivering when we give our word.”



Ironworkers Have Tradition and Honor in Project Labor Agreements

Once again, it is my duty to inform you there has been an increase in work stoppages on jobs governed by project labor agreements.

Project labor agreements are being used more and more frequently to help gain market share on new Greenfield sites, as well as maintaining and expanding our position in the plant maintenance industry. These agreements include the ones developed by local building trades, as well as national agreements such as the Heavy and Highway Agreement, the General Presidents Agreement, the National Maintenance Agreement, the National Construction Agreement, and many other local and national building trades negotiated agreements.

Before a project labor agreement is sanctioned by the National Building and Construction Trades, it must contain some specific language addressing issues that can make us more competitive such as, uniform overtime and holidays, a subcontracting clause, a remedy for grievances and jurisdictional disputes. It must require a pre-job, and most important it must contain a No Work Stoppage-No Lock Out clause.

A No Work Stoppage-No Lock Out clause is the most important because it is the foremost reason owners and contractors are willing to use the agreement and commit to an all-union job. We agree to use the methods built into these agreements to resolve any and all problems on the job while we continue to work.

In other words, we give our word we will keep working even when we feel someone is doing our work or when we believe a contractor is violating the agreement.

If for some reason we break our word and strike, slow down or in any way disrupt the job, there are monetary consequences for the local union that are quite substantial. For instance, under the National Construction Agreement (NCA), if an arbitrator determines a violation has occurred and the local union is responsible, liquidated damages will be awarded either to the owner or the affected employer as follows; \$10,000 for the first shift, \$15,000 for the second shift, \$20,000 for the third shift, and \$25,000 for every shift thereafter on which the craft has not returned to work.

The National Maintenance Agreement (NMA) is also very stringent. If an NMA job is considered a Yellow Card Site, the owner has committed to perform all of the work at the site under the NMA agreement (all union). Under these circumstances, the fine for the first shift is \$10,000 and \$40,000 for every shift thereafter on which the employees have not returned to work. The fines are collected from the local union and paid directly to the owner because any delay in the schedule impacts their production and can be extremely expensive. If an arbitrator finds the employer in violation of an illegal lock out the agreement requires the employer to pay the exact same amount in penalties.

Although the monetary damages are substantial, there is collateral damage of much greater importance. If these illegal work stoppages continue, the agreements will lose credibility with the owners and contractors. We know, and the contractors and owners generally agree, we are the best at what we do, but they are willing to use less qualified non-union workers if they have to put up with work stoppages no matter what the reason. They have a choice, and they know that the non-union do not have jurisdictional disputes nor do they have strikes. I want it clearly understood; our International will take whatever action necessary to prevent illegal work stoppages. We have good representation on the NMAPC committee and all the other agreement committees. Your officers have access to that representation and have agreed to abide by the committees decisions.

I am proud to say that our members are proving we are the best skilled, safest, and most productive craft in the industry, and everyday we are making new inroads with owners because they recognize we can deliver on our promise to get the job done on time without interruptions. We are a proud craft filled with tradition and honor. Never forget that part of that tradition is working hard and looking out for each other, but perhaps the most important part is delivering when we give our word.

Fraternally,