

Utility Workers Union of America, Local 18007

Affiliated with A.F.L.-C.I.O.



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Timothy Jaroch
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Ralph B. Ruiz
Financial Secretary-Treasurer

Richard Passarelli
Business Manager

Michael Bogard
Trustee

Jason L. Carter
Trustee

Adrian Duenas
Trustee

FEBRUARY 2011 NEWSLETTER

Presidents Report

Brothers and Sisters,

First, our hearts go out to our brother at Philadelphia Gas who lost his life, along with those who were injured in that horrible explosion last month. As we still mourn our loss of Brother Mike Gryga less than a year ago, we know what pain they feel.

Snowstorm

I salute everybody for their hard work during the worst snowstorm in the last decade. The conditions were brutal, to say the least. Operations wisely chose to pair up everybody in service since parking would be impossible. What wasn't done wisely was the manner in which workers were paired up at South shop. GM's were assigned to service trucks to drive and help clear snow. This is work that should have been assigned to OA's, but 29 of them were called up in the morning and told to stay home. They weren't told how, or if they would get paid for the day. Just to stay home. We investigated this and were able to secure their pay for the day without being penalized for what they were misguidedly told to do.

Service Utility Worker School

The first UW school finished recently. Sadly only 40% passed. This is troubling especially since these were the most senior OA's in this particular class. I feel that part of the blame for this falls squarely on the company. Since the OA position was created, we unsuccessfully fought to rotate all employees in this group so they could gain experience in every facet of our work and not get buried in a repetitious position like ISI's or DNP's. But the company chose to bury people in certain departments and deny them job experience. We have scheduled follow up meetings to work toward a solution to this. At this rate we will be over 30 bodies short in 2011 alone.

For those of you that are in the ride-along phase of training before school, keep your eyes open and learn what you can. If you're a service employee with an OA riding with you, PLEASE take your time and show them what you can. A lot of these brothers and sisters don't have the luxury of time that you did.

P.E.A.C.E Team Observations begin!

Our peer group team will begin their field observations in February. Again I want to thank everybody on the team for their selfless commitment to our safety. I cannot stress enough how important this project is to all of us. The work the team has

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put into this project so far is enormous. They have been educated how to assess risk exposure and how to seek improvements in the way we work.

Contractor Database Form

Thanks to all of our brothers who have reported contractor observations. We have received reports of services stubbed up 2 feet away from the premise, contractors shoring in gaseous environments, along with several others incidents.

If you have an observation on a contractor doing anything that needs to be brought to our attention, you can report it through our website! On top of the web home page there is a link under “contact us” link. You don’t have to identify yourself if you choose not to. Paper forms can be obtained from your steward or you can call the office.

Our next membership meeting will be March 10th.

Fraternally,

Tom Sargeant



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Vice President's Report: Tim Jaroch

Brothers and sisters,

I would like to start off first by saying I hope everyone is having an enjoyable New Year. We finally got informed that everyone has new breathing masks. As a crew leader myself, I find that these new masks are much better and updated than the older masks. Everyone needs to be using them properly and when needed, no excuses.

We are still working and have made great progress on updating the Service and Distribution department equipment. We are teaming up with the company, and they realize how much we need the updated equipment.

We realize that the phones, on occasion, are down at the shops when you are trying to call in for a PTO day. In this instance you are instructed to call 1-800-773-1200. This will keep you from any disciplinary action.

To all OA's who didn't understand why we as a board fought the company to make utility workers learn both sides of the departments. If you read the article below you can better understand why your job is secured for the future by learning both departments.

No job guarantees at AT&T, union says

AT&T and IBEW Local 21 continued negotiating Wednesday the potential loss of 830 jobs in Illinois and Northwest Indiana and the closing of two Chicago telephone centers. The employees are not guaranteed other AT&T jobs, regardless of whether the work moves elsewhere, said IBEW Local 21 spokesman Tom Hopper, correcting an erroneous statement issued last week by AT&T.

All the members, including myself, would like to send a big thank you to Rick Passarelli. He took time out of his busy schedule to work hard on getting *Helmets to Hardhats* for our veterans. He got everyone, including Integrys, on the same level and working together to make this happen.

Fraternally;

Tim Jaroch

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Business Managers Report

Grievance report – North Shop

- Two Step 2 grievances were held at North Shop for tardiness issues that resulted in 1 member receiving a 20 day layoff and another member receiving a 5 day layoff. Both grievances were denied at Step 2.
- A meeting was held for a member who filed a harassment complaint against their supervisor, after discussion with all parties the case has been resolved.
- A case was settled from North Shop for a member who had outstanding medical bills that were not paid by company insurance, after investigating the case and holding a series of phone calls the member will have those bills taken care of properly.
- A case of PTO being taken from a member with a Matrix claim on comp benefits and who had not yet exhausted all their STD benefits has been resolved, and the PTO has been restored.
- An investigation at North Shop for seniority rights violations dating back to a mou from 2001 has been resolved with the company building in some guarantee's for those members who had been jumped wrongfully back in 2001.

Central Shop-

- I currently have 2 discharge cases that are being investigated for violations of the drug and alcohol policy.
- Currently, there is still an ongoing investigation of an incident in which a customer pressure tested their own house piping.
- A resolution to a complaint in which a member had workman's comp restrictions questioned, this case was referred to our company attorney and resolved.
- A member received a disciplinary layoff of 3 days for tardiness.

South shop-

- I currently have 2 indefinite layoff pending discharge cases involving an accident and a small fire that occurred on a jobsite. The investigation is still active and we are working to get answers from the company.
- 2 grievances were settled involving members who were told to stay home and were not paid when calling in and properly notifying the company they would be late due to circumstances beyond their control.

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First I would like to thank every member who braved the Blizzard of 2011, by making it in to work and offering your services, again 18007 has risen to the occasion of providing emergency service to over 850,000 customers who thank you for your service to them. The E-Board is very proud of all your efforts Thank you!

A meeting was held with the company to discuss further plans to move forward with a new school for new hires. I had the support from our National President Mike Langford, our National Director of Training Rich Mata, who came in from D.C. and our Region 4 Rep. Jim Gennett. The meeting covered many topics and different ideas and most importantly putting a plan in place to get the ball rolling with exploring certificate programs and even degree programs for new hires. It's time that the work you do is recognized as a profession with a viable trade that we can all be proud of. I'd like to remind everyone that the company already has a tuition reimbursement policy for those who take classes that will benefit from employment within the company.

A separate meeting was held with many dignitaries from the Federal Governments Department of Veterans Affairs, Teamsters, as well as Integrys company management. This meeting was specifically to try and dovetail the new training school with opportunities for returning Veterans coming back from the wars. We will try and adopt a way to explore this within the new school structure that we will be working on.

I would like to draw attention to something that should make every member very proud. The new safety team, P.E.A.C.E, that has been preparing for months now to conduct its first peer observations, will be out on the streets. There should be no questions to the intent of this group about their mission. The sole purpose of their mission is to provide the membership a service to identify hazards and limit the line of fire exposures, as well as try and resolve potentially dangerous situations by peer observations. **NO NAMES, NO DISCIPLINE, NO BLAME!** Can any of us ever imagine that WE (the Union) would have a safety facilitator who is a UNION Brother, would have his own office to work out of when he is not in the field, have 3 new vehicles purchased by the company for only the Union P.E.A.C.E team to use just to visit work sites and help any Brother or Sister they can? I think we all know the answer to that question, never!

The partnership commitment of the Joint Health and Safety committee has yielded the membership many things to be proud of. When I asked Pete Jones to step up and accept the assignment, the first thing he told me was " Rick I'm proud to help anyway I can, if it means making sure our membership is safe you can count me in." Pete accepted the challenge and has answered the bell! The E Board helped establish a core team to get training and helped with the project. To date we have P.E.A.C.E team members who have received many hours of training and are able to identify and control exposures. We have carried your voices to many meetings, phone calls, protests and small battles to win new tools, equipment and procedure changes. The company listened and has allowed us a chance to take ownership of our own safety. If anyone remembers I made a single promise to all of you when speaking to all the shops the day following Brother Mike Gryga's death. We would not allow Mike's death to be in vain. That is why all of us should welcome the safety program that we have started and recognize why WE STARTED THIS! It's for Mike's memory and YOU! Please work safe! And protect yourself.

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A Reminder of a very sad incident involving our sister local Gas Workers Local 686 Philadelphia PA.

1 Brother was killed and 4 critically injured in a gas explosion, Keith is a personnel friend of mine and of this local he also sits on the National Executive Board in D.C with me. Keith and Local 686 supported us when we had our own tragedy with Mike and his crew, they offered thoughts prayers and any support that we needed. I have spoke to Keith to offer any assistance they may need for the brothers who were injured with their long road to recovery. If you would like to help, see the Article below. Thank you!

Fraternally

Rick

***Sent on behalf of Keith Holmes,
President U.W.U.A. Local 686***

Dear President Langford,

First and foremost, the Executive Board, General Committee, and the Membership of Local 686 would like to express its gratitude for the outpouring of support we have received from you, the National Staff and from the many locals around the country in our time of deep sorrow. We have received many emails and phone calls, all asking how they can help in this time of need. It is at times like this that we find out truly what it means to be part of a Union. We would like to inform everyone that the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge # 5 (Philadelphia) has generously pledged to donate all proceeds of this year's fund raiser to the victims of the January 18th 2011 explosion. The event takes place this Friday, January 28th 2011 starting at 3:30 pm at the F.O.P Lodge # 5 1336 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia, PA. We would appreciate if you could pass this along to all those who have expressed their desire to help and are able to attend. For those unable to attend, but would still like to make a donation to the victims of the explosion, they can send checks in care of U.W.U.A. Local 686 (please include the following in the memo line "For the victims of the recent explosion" to 9190 Marshall Street, Philadelphia, PA 19114.

*In Solidarity,
Robert Smith
Business Agent
U.W.U. A. Local 686*

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“Whatever Can Go Wrong Will Go Wrong”

Words we should all live by, especially because of the dangerous work we do. A number of disciplinary situations have been addressed at the shops lately and several of them were involving Crew Leaders. The company depends on Crew Leaders to know and follow proper procedures to do our work safely. Procedures are in place to protect life and property. Some tasks may be repetitive where we become complacent and take shortcuts. All it takes is a split second when we aren't paying as much attention as we should. This philosophy also pertains to doing things outside your classification duties, like jumpstarting your own vehicle. When we are out in the street, always have on your mind that someone is watching you. OSHA reps seem to come out of nowhere. When there is any infraction cited, all procedures must be followed because everything you did that day will be scrutinized. Everything should be done by the book. Let's all follow procedures so we can maintain a safe work environment and go home safely to our families.

Conrad Vega,

Recording Secretary



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One Trustee's Blotter.....

1st and foremost, I'd like to thank all of the brothers and sisters who braved the blizzard of 2011 and came out to work. As you are aware, the industry in which we are a part of doesn't stop. On top of that we are in the city that we work. Remember we are the "Guardians of Gas" in the City of Chicago.

It is very disturbing to me the number of members that have been disciplined for not following work by the manual. (If you're not aware of how to do your job, shame on you. So find your service manual and refresh your skills) I have gone in the office with several members and there is one constant in every meeting. Did the employee complete the job following the proper procedure? Or did you follow the manual? I don't care. Either way, it's always looked a point that's made. Understand this one thing; there has never been a time frame for any job. (Except for coming in on time and leaving on time) We must take our time and leave each job safe. In case you didn't know, there are compliance regulators (What up John!) that come out and audit the work that we do. In distribution, I understand that OSHA may appear on a job site with no prior warning. So let's do our job the correct way. Speaking of being on time, there are some that are habitually late. Then when they are disciplined for it, it's always a novel behind it. I can see it if your car broke down once, or the traffic was unusually bad. But every day! Uh, your shop manager is watching you with those googly eyes. C'mon let's make it a point to be on time.

I appreciate all of the members that continue to support the web site by logging on frequently. This is where you will receive all the latest news from the source. I will be returning the monthly shop talk and in the future I am hoping to include a member's forum. But until then, you are encouraged to leave comments and blog.

Speaking of which, I will be coming out to different shops and take pictures and have spotlights on different members. So if anyone wants to nominate someone from their shop, feel free to do so and I will contact that member for an interview.

Lastly, I want to send out condolences the family and friends PGW employee that lost his life in the horrific gas explosion in Philadelphia. Unfortunately we know how it feels to lose a brother in a horrible way.

Please be Safe!!

Fraternally yours,

Jason J.L. Carter. Peace

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Trustee Report- Adrian Dueñas

Brothers and Sisters

I would like to start out by wishing all of our members a Happy New Year and hope that everyone is doing well this winter season. We have had some serious storms this winter and record numbers in snow fall. Let's all be careful out there and always be aware of your surroundings. Leave plenty of time for travel as I am sure many of you have heard about our members being written up for being late, these supervisors are not being lenient. Even in situations when members call ahead to say they are going to be late, they are still being written up. Let's not give them the opportunity to come after us.

As you have all read in **THE UTILITY WORKER** magazine sent out by The National every quarter. There has been a big push to get the word out and send the message to Elect Worker-Friendly Candidates. Thanks to our National there have been over 200,000 union volunteers pushing for Candidates who would stand with Working Families. Because of the importance of having Union friendly Candidates Our National is rolling out new **COPE** cards. COPE is a fund which contributes to these Candidates. In the upcoming weeks your Stewards will be passing out these new cards from The UWUA, please fill them out and hand them back to your Union Reps.

Local 18007 and its Membership have a long standing tradition with COPE. Our Union has been involved in COPE even before joining The UWUA. Having a voice in this City, State and Country is not something you could put an amount on. Being in COPE is strictly voluntary and you could only participate by filling out the COPE card. What you contribute is entirely up to you, give what you want, you select the amount. By participating in COPE you are automatically entered in a raffle that has its drawing at the November Membership meeting which is also hospitality night. When filling out the COPE card only provide your **HR Number**, social security numbers are not required. For those members already enrolled there is no need to fill out the new cards unless you would like to make changes to your contribution. Any questions ask your shop Stewards, Board Members or even your Union Brothers and Sisters who are already participating.

Hope to see everyone at the next Membership meeting. March 10.

Fraternally

Adrian Dueñas