



The Current

News from IBEW Local 1837

December 2013

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers - Maine & New Hampshire

Union Celebrates a String of Successful Organizing Campaigns

In an era of dramatically declining union membership in the private sector, IBEW Local #1837 has bucked that trend with some major organizing victories in Maine and New Hampshire.

Customer Service Representatives (CSR's) at the Central Maine Power Company Call Center in Augusta voted in June to be represented by IBEW Local #1837 for collective bargaining. In a secret ballot election administered by the National Labor Relations Board, a majority of the 42 employees on the eligible voter list voted in favor of the Union.

A smaller group of temporary workers also voted at the urging of the Union, although their ballots were contested by the Company. The Union subsequently filed a separate petition to represent those workers but withdrew it when CMP decided to hire additional full-time CSR's and discontinue the use of temporary CSR's. Most of the temporary CSR's were offered full-time positions.

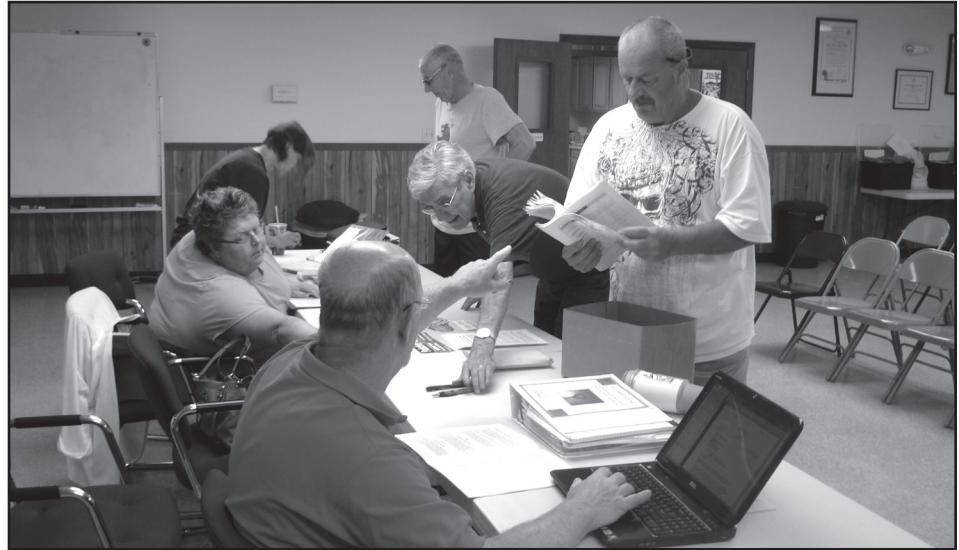
This is the second attempt by CMP's Augusta CSR's to join IBEW. An earlier attempt in 2005 fell short by a few votes. April Cooper was one of the Customer Service Representatives who participated in both campaigns.

"It's been a long time coming," Cooper said. "It should've happened in 2005."

"I'm very happy that the Augusta Call Center stuck together to make a change," said CSR Joe Giuffrida.

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IBEW 1837 Members Ratify Several Union Contracts in Both States



The ratification vote for the new PSNH contract took place at various locations in June throughout New Hampshire, including the Plumbers' and AFL-CIO Hall in Hooksett.

This past year has been unusually busy for IBEW 1837 members and staff as they have successfully negotiated six new contracts at our represented companies in both New Hampshire and Maine. While most have been successor agreements that took the place of contracts that were set to expire, union negotiators also succeeded in negotiating first-time agreements for newly-represented workers as well as a landmark integration agreement between two companies.

Public Service Company of New Hampshire (PSNH)

The largest successor agreement was at PSNH with contracts ratified covering approximately 450 members in the utility and generation sides of the state's largest electric utility. Members in both Utility and Generation at PSNH approved a new 4-year contract agreement with the Company. The contract calls for an 11¼% (3, 2.75, 2.5 & 3%) wage increase over the term of the agreement with cash bonuses for the workers in each of the first two years.

"While it certainly wasn't everything we wanted, the Committee worked hard to get the best deal possible," said IBEW 1837 Business Manager Dick Rogers.

A particular challenge for Union negotiators was the Company's determined stance that employees of all Northeast Utilities companies should be paying the same amount for health insurance. This became a significant issue since NU's decision to switch core plans meant higher costs for our members who wanted to "buy up" to coverage comparable to their existing health insurance plan. IBEW countered that our members should not be required to pay a higher percentage

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Union & Brookfield Agree on Reorganization Plan, Contract Extension

IBEW Local #1837 has announced a final agreement between the Union and Brookfield Renewable Energy Partners officials on the company's reorganization plans and a 4-year extension of the parties' Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Early in September, Brookfield notified the Union of their intention to eliminate 21 of a total of 51 positions at the hydroelectric dams they acquired from NextEra Energy Resources LLC late last year.

IBEW 1837 Assistant Business Manager Bill Dunn was joined by Chief Steward Ed Goodale and IBEW 1837 Business Manager Dick Rogers for the negotiations that stretched over several weeks. On Monday, November 11, an agreement was signed that included a voluntary early retirement plan for those 55 and older, an enhanced severance package for other members, and the extension of the contract that was set to run out in February.



Ed Goodale works at the West Buxton Dam on Maine's Saco River in late November and looks ahead to a smaller workforce at Brookfield.

"The Union's goal was to mitigate the damage to our members by persuading the Company to offer enhanced severance pay and an early retirement package," Rogers said. "Our hope was to avoid any involuntary layoffs."

The new collective bargaining agreement was ratified by a majority of the members, many of whom will no longer be employed by the Company. The 4-year contract extension will provide some sense of stability to the 30 IBEW 1837 members expected to remain at Brookfield. The deal includes a 10% wage increase over the term of the agreement and a \$4,000 signing bonus effective in February.

Union members expressed their gratitude to their leadership team for making the best of a bad situation.

"I think we had a lot of positive feedback from our members, but there's still some uneasiness and trust issues about Brookfield that we hope we can overcome," Chief Steward Goodale said. "Losing so many members at the same time as a contract extension is bittersweet."

Some of the positions will be moved to Brookfield's Operations Center in Marlborough, Massachusetts. On March 1, the Company will begin to reduce their Maine workforce and many of those who will remain are skeptical that all the work can be done with only 30 people. The contract extension includes language that may help the Union to recoup some of those positions in the future.

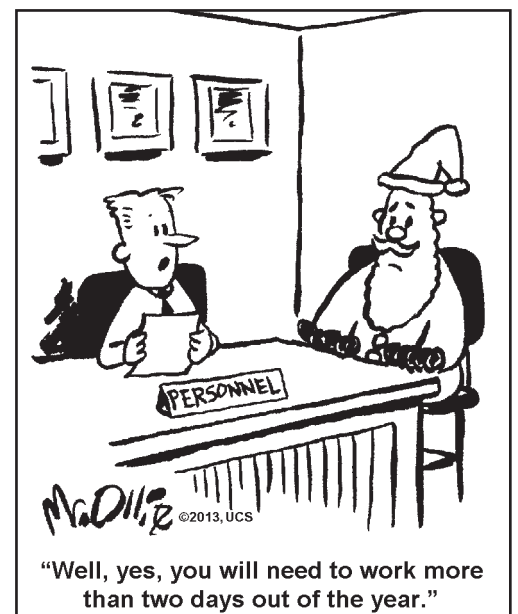
Brookfield Acquires Black Bear Hydro Dams

Brookfield Renewable Energy Partners further expanded their reach into Maine by announcing in early November that they would acquire nine Black Bear Hydro dams from Arc Light Partners, Inc. IBEW represents 15 workers at the hydroelectric facilities that were once owned by Bangor Hydro.

At a meeting with employees attended by IBEW 1837 Business Manager Dick Rogers, Brookfield announced that they will honor the contract ratified by union members at Black Bear Hydro this past summer (see story on page 5).

"This will be the first time in a long time that one company has owned as much of the hydro in Maine as Brookfield will," said Jeffrey Thaler, professor of Energy Law and Policy at the University of Maine, in a report published by the *Bangor Daily News*.

Brookfield acquired 19 dams from NextEra Energy Resources in December of 2012 and added to the ten dams they already owned. With the Black Bear Hydro dams in their portfolio they will now own a total of 38.



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These workers will be incorporated into the largest bargaining unit at CMP with more than 500 other union employees. Negotiations on their first contract agreement have made little progress. The Company is seeking to maintain the almost total control they now enjoy over the terms and working conditions at the Call Center.

“Our most important work going forward will be showing solidarity with all the workers, whether they voted yes or no, to improve their conditions at the Call Center,” IBEW 1837 Business Manager Dick Rogers said.

Customer Service Representatives in Portland were already represented by the Union. Both groups of workers take customer service and billing phone calls on behalf of Maine’s largest electric utility.

In late April, Fiber Microwave Technicians at Central Maine Power voted 5 - 1 to join IBEW Local Union #1837. With the union win in the NLRB secret ballot, these six workers will become part of the largest existing bargaining unit at CMP along with hundreds of other IBEW members.

“We’re very pleased with the election outcome,” Fiber Microwave Tech Bob Craig said. “We were strong for the union from the start, and despite numerous anti-union meetings, we became stronger.”

The Fiber Microwave Techs are responsible for the installation, maintenance, troubleshooting and repair of CMP’s fiber-optic cable and microwave networks that carry both voice and data communications. They also maintain the Load Management and Energy Management Systems for the Company. The CMP Fiber Microwave Technicians were clearly elated by their election victory.

“The Union has been very helpful and we appreciate all the hard work they put into this campaign,” Craig continued.

Negotiations have started for this group, but the Company seems determined to maintain the unilateral flexibility over the wages, working hours and working conditions that they had previous to this group’s organizing efforts.

In early June, the Building Mechanics and Attendant at Public Service Company of New Hampshire voted unanimously to be represented by IBEW Local Union #1837. In a secret ballot election administered by the National Labor Relations Board, they voted 4 - 0 to join the Union with more than 425 other employees at PSNH.

“We’re pretty excited to align ourselves with IBEW and start to enjoy the benefits that our co-workers share,” said PSNH Building Mechanic Tom Eaton. “It’ll be good to have the security of being part of the large bargaining unit.”

The Building Mechanics at PSNH are responsible for the maintenance, repair and installation of building and mechanical systems including plumbing, heating, electrical work, HVAC, and building controls throughout the company’s service area. The Building Attendant has a wide range of responsibilities including the design, moving and installation of furniture and office systems, as well as other duties. A first contract agreement for them was reached in late November.

Unfortunately, one large campaign resulted in a defeat for the workers. Customer Service Representatives at the Northeast Utilities Call Center in Manchester, New Hampshire lost their bid to join the Union this summer by a 55 - 93 vote. A secret ballot election was conducted by the National Labor Relations Board after a long, contentious campaign marred by unfair labor practice charges against the Company.

In spite of Company threats, interrogations, and creating the impression that employees were under surveillance as a result of their support for the Union, nearly 40% of the Customer Service Representatives voted to be represented by IBEW Local #1837. The NU Call Center Customer Service Representatives had many reasons for trying to form a Union. They cited a pattern of unfair and inconsistent treatment by managers for some workers while other employees enjoy the benefit of obvious favoritism. Like almost all non-union workers, the CSR’s are “at will” employees who can be fired for virtually any reason at any time.



Customer Service Representatives from the CMP’s Augusta Call Center will be part of the largest bargaining unit at the utility.

IBEW 1837 Members Ratify Several Union Contracts in Both States

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of their incomes than employees of NU subsidiaries in Massachusetts or Connecticut, but the Company didn't agree. Ultimately, PSNH's last and final offer included cash bonuses that were designed to alleviate some of the pain of the higher healthcare premiums.

Another high priority for the IBEW Negotiating Team was to preserve the options for taking unpaid leaves of absence and for obtaining additional unpaid vacation time. Thanks to the Union's persistence, the Company eventually relented and dropped their proposal to eliminate this benefit for IBEW members. Non-union employees were recently notified that they are indeed losing this benefit, one that 76% of PSNH employees utilized, according to Company figures.

There were allowance increases negotiated for qualified members who wear EH (electrical hazard) footwear or FR (fire retardant) clothing.

"I'd like to thank the committee for working hard and tirelessly in a very difficult negotiation," said IBEW Assistant Business Manager Tom Ryan. "It was a real pleasure to work with them."

In addition to Brother Rogers and Brother Ryan, the Union Negotiating Team included Pam Paquette, Kerry Guptill, Tracy Houghton, Rick Simons, Tony Sapienza, Jay Davidson, Bill Tarallo, Becky Johnson, Jim Hale, Eric Madson, Dave Ouellette, Justin McNeff, Mark Easter and IBEW 1837 Administrative Assistant Sue Ekola.

More details at www.ibew1837.org/PSNH_Contract

Maine Public Service (MPS)

IBEW members at Maine Public Service (MPS) have ratified a new contract with an average wage increase of 8.8% over two years. The agreement also includes improvements in overtime, call-out, standby, and system emergency pay as well as a number of other improvements. The contract is an addendum to the collective bargaining agreement the Union already has with Bangor Hydro (BHE), also owned by Emera, Inc.

The contract represents the integration of the agreements at the two companies.

"I'm pleased that the overall contract is better in virtually every way for our members at Maine Public Service," IBEW 1837 Business Manager Dick Rogers said. "While I'm disappointed that they will have fewer Lead Lineworkers in order to bring them into alignment with Bangor Hydro, the Union did get the company to delay the transitions to the new positions until January 1, 2015."

During the agreement Line, Garage and Power Tech classifications are brought into pay parity while leaving Stock Clerks at their current pay rates plus percentage increases. The Union Negotiating Committee tried very hard to get the Stock Clerks up to parity with their counterparts at BHE but to no avail. However, Stock Clerks along with Meter Representatives are slated for wage increases of 3% in December 2013 and 3.25% in December 2014. The contract also includes raises and a progression schedule for the Customer Service Representatives who are in the contract for the first time at MPS.

Rogers said the committee also would have preferred seeing the wage parity take effect upon ratification.

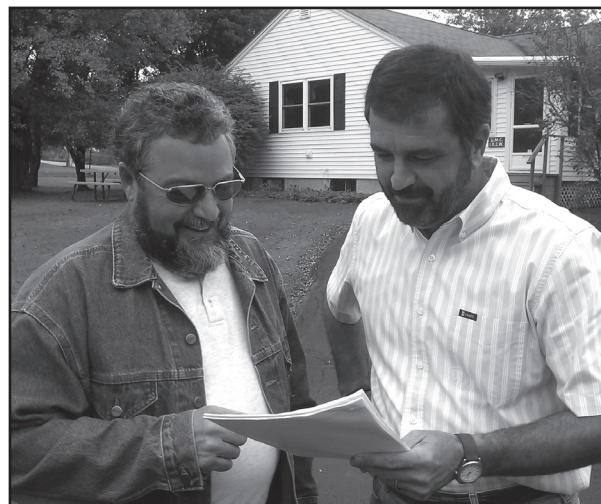
IBEW members at MPS will be able to keep their current health insurance with the New England Electrical Workers Benefit Fund through 2015 with the option of switching to the BHE plan in 2014.

IBEW Chief Steward Pat Cote was upbeat about the ratified agreement and the process that brought them there.

"I think people generally feel good about it," Cote said. "I think we learned something from the new company and they learned something from us – that we're good people."

Cote credited Union Negotiating Team members Renee Gilman and Bob Economy from BHE for "helping to bridge the barrier" between the two companies. He also praised Dick Rogers for his expertise, new team member Roxanne Smith as "a real asset" to the Union negotiators, and his longtime co-workers Jon Lauritsen, Bruce Ayotte and Cary Daigle.

More details on the MPS contract at www.ibew1837.org/MPS_Contract



MPS Chief Steward Pat Cote and IBEW 1837 Business Manager Dick Rogers review the ratified agreement that included significant wage increases for members.

Black Bear Hydro

IBEW Local 1837 members at Black Bear Hydro Partners, LLC approved a new 5-year contract that includes wage increases in each year alongside a gradually-increasing cap on the medical insurance contribution rate for employees. The ratification vote took place at the company's headquarters in Milford, Maine.

The agreement also includes an increase in the Company's 401(k) contribution, and an increase in the annual boot allowance and the addition of an annual allowance toward a work Carhartt jacket or work bibs.

"I'm pleased that our members at Black Bear Hydro have approved this agreement," said IBEW Local 1837 Business Manager Dick Rogers. "While it's difficult to predict where health care costs will go in the future, we believe this agreement gives them some decent pay increases and security around their health insurance contributions over the next five years."

The Union members at Black Bear Hydro operate hydroelectric dams that were previously owned by PPL and before that, Bangor Hydro. Many of the current workers are longtime union members who have been employed by all three companies.

"I want to thank Gary Crane for his contributions as he represented his fellow Union members at the table," Rogers continued. "He was a great asset with his prior negotiating experience."

In early November, it was announced that Brookfield Renewable Energy Partners had agreed to purchase the assets of Black Bear Hydro (see story on page 2). Brookfield has pledged to honor the terms of the contract agreement.

More details on the Black Bear Hydro contract at www.ibew1837.org/Black_Bear_Contract

Unitil Centralized Electric Dispatch (CED)

The Electric System Operators at Unitil Service Corporation's Centralized Electric Dispatch (CED) in Portsmouth ratified their first collective bargaining agreement. A majority of the workers had voted in September of last year to be represented by IBEW Local #1837 in a secret ballot election administered by the National Labor Relations Board.

"We're pleased that the System Operators have ratified their first contract," IBEW 1837 Business Manager Dick Rogers said. "Our Union Negotiating Team all thought it was a good agreement and had recommended its passage."

The Unitil Electric System Operators will enjoy improvements in their pay, health insurance coverage and vacation selection as a result of the new agreement. At the conclusion of the contract on May 31, 2016, wage disparities will be largely eliminated in the bargaining unit with all five System Operators receiving equal pay for equal work. For the System Operators, the new deal means being able to make personal plans in a way that they never could before.



IBEW 1837 Business Manager Tom Ryan, System Operator Mike Pouliot & IBEW 1837 Business Manager Dick Rogers completed a first contract agreement at Unitil CED.

"Vacation scheduling in the contract means we can take time off when we want to take it instead of when the Company says we can," System Operator Mike Pouliot said. "That will mean a big improvement in our quality of life."

Brother Pouliot expressed overall satisfaction with the agreement and is already looking ahead to their second contract less than three years from now.

"A big benefit from our contract is that we will all have equal pay and be starting from the same platform. There won't be this great disparity," Pouliot added.

In addition to Brothers Rogers, Ryan, and Pouliot, the Union Negotiating Team was aided by Mike Behcard and IBEW Local #1837 Administrative Assistant Susan Ekola.

About 45 members of IBEW Local 1837 already work at two New Hampshire locations of Unitil Energy Systems, Inc. (UES): "Capital" in Concord and "Seacoast" in Kensington.

More details on the Unitil CED contract at www.ibew1837.org/Unitil_CED_Contract

Littleton Water and Light (LWL)

Union members in Littleton, New Hampshire ratified a new 5-year contract at the municipal utility a full two months before the expiration of their current collective bargaining agreement.

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The successor agreement takes effect on January 1, 2014 and runs through December 31, 2018 with 2.8% wage increases in each year of the contract.

“I think this is a fair contract for our members at Littleton,” IBEW 1837 Assistant Business Manager Tom Ryan said. “It’s a fair deal with guaranteed wage increases and no substantive changes to the current terms and conditions of employment.”

Brother Ryan was assisted in the negotiations by Chief Steward Paul Bresnahan and Jeff Simano. IBEW 1837 Business Manager Dick Rogers was on hand for the contract meeting and the ratification vote.

Approximately 10 members of IBEW Local 1837 at Littleton Water and Light are employed as Lineworkers, Meter Workers, Water Workers, and Clerks.

More details on the Littleton contract at www.ibew1837.org/LWL_Contract

WABI-TV 5 in Bangor

Improvements in rest-time provisions and larger, guaranteed wage increases highlight the 3-year contract agreement that was ratified by the five Operating Technicians at Bangor, Maine’s WABI-TV, Channel 5 in August. In addition, some Operating Techs received wage adjustments, which improved the compensation parity at the CBS affiliate.

“I appreciate the willingness of WABI’s management to work with us to make a few modest but significant improvements for our members,” said IBEW 1837 Business Manager Dick Rogers. I’m grateful for the work our new steward Dana Woodward did to help identify the important issues for the Operating Techs and develop proposals to address them.”

WABI is owned by Diversified Communications, and the IBEW 1837 members there perform technical work behind the scenes to keep the content rolling to consumers’ televisions.

Brookfield Renewable Energy Partners

A contract extension was approved as part of a agreement on the Company’s reorganization. See page 2 for the story.

NextEra Energy Resources

Agreement was reached on a 1-year contract extension for our members at Wyman Station in Yarmouth as *The Current* went to press in late November. It included a wage increase and successor language that should give stability through the anticipated upcoming sale of the assets. The Union Bargaining Team included Chief Steward Peter Brennan, IBEW Local #1837 President Ray Colello and Assistant Business Manager Bill Dunn. A ratification vote was immediately scheduled.

Central Maine Power Administrative Technical Bargaining Unit

Negotiations proceeded for a few months, but the Union and CMP could not come to an agreement. The contract expired on June 30, 2013, and our members formerly known as the “CMP 47” have been working without a contract since then. The Company is obligated to maintain nearly all the provisions of the expired contract until an agreement is reached.



Quick Notes and Announcements



Non-union workers at PSNH and NStar recently lost the option of buying an extra week’s vacation - a benefit enjoyed by more than 70% of PSNH employees. IBEW members still have this popular benefit thanks to our union contract agreement. Non-union folks also lost the day after Thanksgiving as a holiday, but will have MLK Day instead.

The **Maine AFL-CIO Working Families Legislative Scorecard** was mailed to 40,000 union members to help them see how their state representatives voted on labor issues. You can read it online at: www.maineaflcio.org/scorecard

The **New England Electrical Workers Benefits Fund** has announced that there will be no cost increase for plan participants in 2014.

The **Union Atlantic Electricity** is a Maine provider of electricity that has pledged to support working people and their unions. Their rates and options are worth checking out: www.unionatlanticelectricity.com

Members of IBEW 1837 donated hundreds of dollars as well as their free time this year to support the **Solidarity Harvest** program in Maine. Over 1,000 workers who were laid-off or going through tough economic times had a complete Thanksgiving Dinner delivered to their door by a union member or community volunteer. IBEW 1837 volunteers included Bob Toole, Cynthia Phinney, Bill Dunn, Corissa Avery, Shayne Bither, Kim Sanborn and former member Jesse Jones.

PSNH and Union Reach AMR Agreement for Affected Meter Readers

IBEW Local #1837 and Public Service Company of New Hampshire (PSNH) reached agreement in late August on a plan that will offer new positions or financial compensation to just under 60 employees expected to be affected by the installation of an Automated Meter Reading (AMR) system. It is anticipated to take a total of two and a half years to install 500,000 of the new meters.

Some of our members will be eligible to retire during this period of time. "Affected Meter Readers," those who were in the position when the agreement was reached, will enjoy expanded bidding rights into available job openings. Those who haven't found a job at PSNH when their position is to be eliminated will be offered a job by the Company. If they choose not to take it, they will receive their severance pay.

In November, the Company and the Union agreed on the job descriptions and wages for the three new AMR job classifications: AMR Driver, Field Service Representative and Meter Office Associate. The Company has agreed to fill the positions needed in each City, Town and Operating Unit based on the projected number of employees required to perform the work in each of the AMR districts (even though employees won't enter the classification until AMR is implemented in their district).

With the implementation of AMR, four districts are being merged: Epping and Portsmouth; Rochester and Chocorua; Keene and Monadnock; and Newport and Hillsboro.

"We want to thank Kerry Guptill and United Steelworkers (USW) members Phil Wasson and Sue Ellen Maher for their help in developing the Memorandum of Agreement," IBEW 1837 Assistant Business Manager Tom Ryan said. USW represents PSNH workers in Nashua and their representatives frequently collaborate with IBEW 1837 on contractual matters.

Other Northeast Utilities companies in Massachusetts and Connecticut have already gone to automated metering systems. Central Maine Power, Unitil, Bangor Hydro and the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative have all begun or completed the transition to an automated system.

\$2 Per Month Dues Increase in 2014

The portion of each member's union dues that goes to IBEW International will increase by \$2 per month beginning on January 1, 2014 due to an increase approved at the IBEW 38th International Convention in 2011. This increase will affect all members in the Brotherhood.

It's important that the members of IBEW 1837 understand that the portion of the dues that go to our Local has not increased. In fact, we have taken many steps to make sure an increase will not be needed for the foreseeable future. We recognize that any increase can be unwelcome during these tough economic times. With a loss of members at the national level and the accompanying loss in revenue since the 2006 convention, the Union's leadership and delegates agreed that the increase was necessary for the International to meet its projected expenses.

Delegates approved a \$2 increase in the monthly per capita dues rate, effective January 1, 2012, and this second increase of \$2, effective January 1, 2014. Delegates also authorized the International Secretary-Treasurer to increase the per capita dues rate an additional \$1, effective January 1, 2016, should the IBEW fail to meet membership growth projections (1% annually).

The monthly per capita dues for each member (sometimes referred to as a "per capita tax") will be as follows:

1/1/12	\$15.00 per month
1/1/14	\$17.00 per month
1/1/16	\$17 or \$18 per month (see above)



CMP Negotiations Coming in 2014

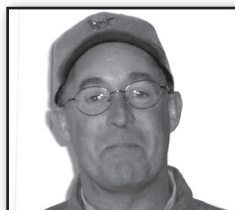
Central Maine Power's contract with IBEW Local #1837's largest bargaining unit doesn't expire until April 30, 2014, but our Union Contract Proposals Subcommittee has already begun meeting to review what IBEW will bring to the bargaining table when negotiations get underway. The first meeting of the Subcommittee was held at our Maine office on November 20. IBEW 1837 Assistant Business Manager Bill Dunn expects negotiations to begin in March.

The best way to make sure that you receive negotiations updates is to provide a personal, home e-mail address to the Union Office. (We won't send Union Updates to a Company email address.) Email your personal email address to union@ibew1837.org.



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In Memory of Kris Jacobson, 1960 - 2013

IBEW Local 1837 is mourning the loss of our union brother, Kris Jacobson, on Sunday, October 6, who passed away after a courageous battle with kidney disease.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Brother Jacobson's family, friends and co-workers.

IBEW Local 1837

www.ibew1837.org



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The Current

Newsletter of IBEW Local 1837

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Bill Dunn & Tom Ryan

Organizer/Newsletter Editor - Matthew Beck

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