

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

Vol. 4 | Issue 2 | Spring 2020

We Are the Power Professionals

IBEW members do our best every day because we're professionals to the core, not because it leads to awards or accolades. But when we are recognized, it's worth celebrating. After all, it's an acknowledgment of our commitment to being the best in the business.

Every year, *Power Magazine* scours the globe to find the best, most efficient and most advanced gas power plants in the world for their annual awards issue. Last year, the editors honored the Wolverine Power Cooperative's 432-megawatt Alpine gas plant in Elmira, Mich., for a record-breaking reliability record.

The plant is not only one of the most reliable in the nation; Alpine's owners say it is the most efficient in their fleet. And IBEW members don't just run the plant—they built it. The \$166-million project began in 2015 and used only union trades. Signatory contractor Swan Electric hired members of Traverse City, Mich., Local 498 for all the substation, power line and construction work that brought the plant to life.

It nearly goes without saying that the project came in on time and on budget.

"I speak for all of us at Alpine when I say we are proud of the work we do to serve our members," said Grand Rapids, Mich., Local 876 member and Chief Plant Operator Dan Boulter. "When people come to our



plant, we take pride in our ownership of its performance and appearance. We take care of everything inside this gate, from cleaning the toilets to troubleshooting our emissions control system."

In recognition of that commitment to professionalism, Wolverine puts the names of the workers who run Alpine on a plaque out front.

Boulter said that while they do nearly all the work themselves—nearly 95 percent of the plant's work orders are for preventative/predictive maintenance—he may be proudest of what he hears from his peers in the industry, the traveling millwrights that work outages and do upgrades all

across the region and see into dozens of plants.

"We like when the millwrights come to the plant and say, 'We don't usually see a plant this clean.' Or, 'We are treated great around here,'" Boulter said. "It's good sign when they tell you, 'When you need help, we want to come back.'"

It's that kind of professionalism and pride from IBEW members—in all branches—that sets our members apart from the competition. With the Code of Excellence as our guide, it's the kind of performance that every day earns us the moniker "The Power Professionals."



What does SPARQ mean to you? Have an idea for the newsletter? Email theSPARQ@ibew.org



Professionalism Is Our Highest Priority

Many of North America's large freight rail systems have taken their quest for increased profits and productivity to the extreme through a technology-based cost- and jobs-cutting ruse called Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR). PSR is putting our members' professionalism to the test by prioritizing efficiency above the safety of workers and the public.

The higher profits from PSR may be great news for shareholders, but we know it's just another case of corporate automation that rarely works as smoothly as expected. Just ask anyone who's struggled with automated phone systems or grocery store checkouts.

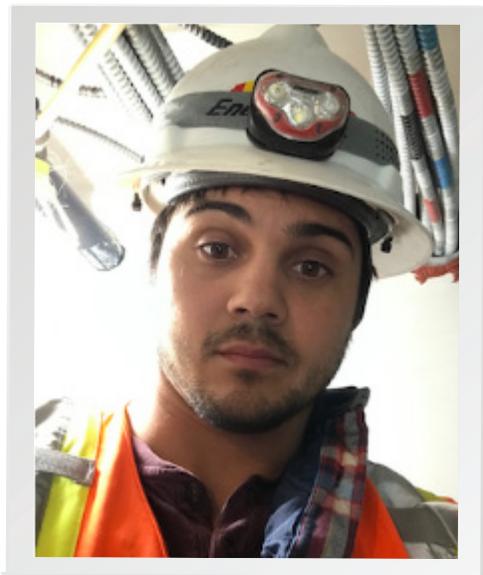
PSR can mean more workplace mishaps, equipment breakdowns and increasingly possible catastrophic events like derailments. If PSR fails, the professionalism of IBEW members will be critical to right the ship. Our railroad members show professionalism by showing up on time,

following proper procedures and taking pride in the jobs they do—all while being the safest, best-trained workers on the planet.



Being the best is a tough ask when more than 20,000 job cuts under PSR within the last year have left remaining workers to rush heavier and longer trains into service while maintenance is deferred, services are consolidated and facilities are closed. Workers are doing more with less, and many are frequently working mandatory overtime in less-than-ideal conditions.

But the IBEW's reputation as an organization of professionals demands that we do our best even as we worry that our own jobs could be the next to go. People's lives depend on our expertise, and when we are able to implement practices that are safer than PSR, our professionalism will be needed more than ever.



Justin Long, Apprentice Wireman
San Luis Obispo, Calif., Local 639

Professionalism From Day One

"I do not believe I could have learned the necessary skills for the electrical industry without the guidance of the IBEW apprenticeship program.

Without a professional apprenticeship, working in the electrical industry is extremely dangerous and I would not feel safe on the jobsite without the supervision of a journeyman and classroom instruction.

My apprenticeship is my ticket to the middle class."

Share your IBEW story for a chance to be included in an upcoming issue of *The Electrical Worker* (IBEW.org/MyIBEWStory).