

NEWS RELEASE

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Unionized Electrical Construction Industry Adopts National Substance Abuse Testing Policy

(Washington, D.C.) – The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) today announced agreement on national contract language on a substance abuse testing policy. The language will be mandatory in all national and local collective bargaining agreements between the two organizations and their local unions and chapters.

The IBEW also said that it would abide by the same standards even when working on agreements between contractors and unions in multiple crafts, but the union cannot require that those agreements include such language.

"This language makes sense for all the right reasons," said IBEW International president Edwin D. Hill. "We are above all concerned for the safety of all workers on the job and for getting help for those members who have substance abuse problems. There are also legitimate concerns over lost productivity and the associated costs that substance abuse can create. We have a responsibility to our customers to provide the best possible service under the safest conditions, and this policy is another positive step to help us do just that."

The mandatory language required that each IBEW local union and NECA chapter implement an area-wide substance abuse policy to include the minimum standards set forth by the national organizations. These standards include the right of an employer to request drug-free applicants from a pool of workers who have been tested and found in compliance. No worker would be forced to be part of the drug-free pool or to submit to testing. Testing may also be required for "reasonable cause" such as possession or selling of prohibited substances. All local programs will include a rehabilitation component for those employees testing positive. A medical officer will review positive test results and must sign a release before that employee can return to work. The standards also provide that only independent, certified laboratories are to conduct all tests.

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