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OUR WORK ENVIRONMENT



WORKING Together

Our Work Environment and How We Change It



Larry Cohen, CWA President

Our work environment keeps changing. But there is one constant: whether you're a flight attendant in Chicago, a corrections officer in West Virginia, a premise technician in Ohio or a university researcher in California, our work environment is important.

This issue of the CWA News looks at what's happening now in our work environment. That means new responses to heat stress and electrocution hazards that face telecom techs, new ways to prevent violence in the workplace and real penalties for employers that break the law and put workers' lives in danger.

CWA is pushing back against management that wants to cut corners on safety to boost productivity and their bottom lines. And we're fighting to make certain that all of our members have safe and healthy workplaces, so that everyone makes it home after a day on the job.

There's a real connection between the work we do on Capitol Hill, in state legislatures and in our communities and what happens in our working lives on the job. Too often,

what happens in Congress makes it harder to make sure we work in a safe environment and live in safe communities. That's because the Senate rules are broken, making it virtually impossible to move forward on progressive legislation.

Case in Point: the current fight in the U.S. Senate over reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act. Since 1994, when this law was first adopted, there has been bipartisan cooperation and a real understanding of just how important this program is to millions of people who face abuse. Sometimes that abuse happens at home, sometimes it finds its way to our work environment.

Nearly 20 percent of all violent crime occurs in the workplace, and 24 percent of workplace violence is related to personal relationships. So it's a workplace issue.

Now, a single senator is using his influence to hold up progress on this bill.

Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), the ranking Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee, doesn't like the improvements to the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization proposed by Senators Patrick Leahy (I-Vt.) and Mike Crapo (R-Idaho). Specifically, Senator Grassley doesn't want the program to cover domestic violence victims who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender; he doesn't like the additional protections provided for undocumented immigrants who are victims of domestic abuse; and he objects to giving Native American tribes more authority to prosecute domestic violence crimes.

Senator Leahy in response to the objections stated: "You cannot say that we will seek to stop domestic violence, but only for certain people. It just boggles the mind."

Grassley's substitute bill not only eliminated improvements in the program but proposed big cuts in funding and the elimination of the Justice Department office that administers the law and coordinates efforts on domestic violence and sexual assault.

That substitute was defeated in committee, but because our broken Senate rules require 60 votes before a measure

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can even get to the Senate floor for debate, this program that is so necessary to the lives of millions of Americans may be permanently blocked.

One senator's agenda can stop the work of the U.S. Senate, even on a life-and-death issue like this.

That's why CWA has made fixing the broken Senate rules a key element in building our democracy. Working with partners, building a movement is the only way we can move a progressive agenda forward in Washington, and beyond.

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By the numbers

Workers' health and safety protections have a long way to go

- 4,340 workers were killed on the job in 2009, an average of 12 workers every day.
- More than 4.1 million work-related injuries and illnesses were reported in 2009, but health and safety experts say the real number is as high as 12 million.
- Job illnesses and injuries cost as much as \$318 billion a year.
- OSHA fines for employers that commit serious violations are extremely small, averaging just \$1,052 for a federal violation and \$858 for a state violation.
- More than 360,000 workers have died on the job since 1970, but only 84 cases have been prosecuted.
- There are 2,218 federal and state OSHA inspectors on the job, or one inspector for every 57,984 workers. It would take 129 years to inspect every workplace.

Source: 2011 AFL-CIO "Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect." Data from 2009.

OUR WORK ENVIRONMENT



Making workplaces safer has always been a top priority for CWA. Across our union, there are more than 2,500 safety and health activists who work together to resolve critical issues for workers in every sector. Injuries from poorly designed work stations or machinery, exposure to toxic chemicals and other deadly substances, overwhelming levels of stress caused by electronic speedups and monitoring, the violence that all too often is part of the job for law enforcement and corrections officers. Reducing and eliminating these hazards to our safety and health, and working to strengthen standards have been the focus of decades of work.

As our work environment changes, we need to do even more to make workplaces safer. And that's what CWA locals and activists are doing every day.

First-ever Criminal Charges Proceeding in UCLA Lab Fire

The University of California and a UCLA professor are facing unprecedented felony charges in connection with a chemistry lab fire that fatally injured UPTC-CWA Local 9119 member Sheri Sangji three years ago.

An arraignment is scheduled for March 7, and members of CWA Local 9119/University Professional and Technical Employees have been writing personal letters to the Los Angeles County District Attorney asking for justice for Sangji's family and a fair outcome that will act to deter future tragedies like this.

Sangji, a 23-year-old staff research assistant, was severely burned when air-sensitive chemicals burst into flames and ignited her clothing. She died 18 days after the Dec. 29, 2008, fire.

"The filing of criminal charges is an important wake-up call for universities and principal investigators (PIs) who often pay less attention to safety than their counterparts in industrial labs," said Joan Lichterman of Local 9119's safety and health committee. "Universities need to ensure that their PIs have the necessary training to ensure the health and safety of employees they direct,

and PIs need to be aware of their personal responsibility. They both must be held accountable when experiments go astray."

The prosecution of this case is the first of its kind for an academic lab, and can have far-reaching effects on lab safety, the local said.

Patrick Harran, a professor and Sangji's supervisor, and the university each are charged with three counts of willfully violating occupa-

tional safety and health standards. Specifically they are accused of failing to correct unsafe work conditions in a timely manner, to require clothing appropriate for the work and to provide proper chemical safety training.

Harran faces 4½ years in prison and the school could be fined up to \$1.5 million for each of three violations.

The potential penalties far exceed

the \$31,875 that Cal/OSHA fined UCLA in 2009 after ruling that Sangji hadn't been trained properly and wasn't wearing protective clothing.

At the time of her death, Sangji was a recent college graduate who took the laboratory job before planning to attend law school. Her devastated family has been pushing investigators to bring charges, calling it the "the first step toward any kind of justice."

Cal OSHA Report Contradicts UCLA on Lab Incident

Chilling details of the investigative report by California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health into the UCLA lab fire that killed Sheri Sangji were just made public in January.

They contradict claims made by the university since being criminally charged by the Los Angeles County District Attorney.

Senior Special Investigator Brian Baudendistel wrote, "based upon the investigation, it is apparent that the laboratory safety practices utilized by UCLA prior to Victim Sangji's death were so defective as to render the University's required Chemical Hygiene Plan and Injury and Illness Prevention Program essentially non-existent. The lack of adequate lab safety training and documentation, lack of effective hazard communication practices, and repeated failure to correct persistent and repeated safety violations within University labs, were all causal deficiencies that led to a systematic breakdown of overall laboratory safety practices at UCLA.

"The testimony obtained in this case clearly establishes that the University accepted the fact that many Principal Investigators [including



Criminal charges have been filed in the death of 23-year old UPTC-CWA Local 9119 member Sheri Sangji, who died following a horrific chemical fire.

Harran, Sangji's supervisor] consistently failed to enforce the use of personal protective equipment within their labs as 'part of the culture.' In fact, as the University's former Manager of Chemical Safety, William Peck, candidly admitted, '...it was kind of common knowledge that laboratory people don't use the proper PPE [personal protective equipment] when they are in the lab ... it was hard to convince the professors that they needed to ... and if the professors didn't enforce it, nobody did.'"

"Dr. Harran simply disregarded the open and obvious dangers presented in this case and permitted

Victim Sangji to work in a manner that knowingly caused her to be exposed to a serious and foreseeable risk of serious injury or death," Baudendistel wrote.

Baudendistel also documented technical failings in the lab and the inappropriate equipment that Sangji used to handle a dangerous chemical substance. "If Dr. Harran had utilized a standard operating procedure as required and would have properly trained Victim Sangji, and assured that clothing appropriate for the work was worn to protect her from inadvertent exposure to tert-Butyl lithium, Victim Sangji's death would have been prevented," he concluded.

Unions Propose Lab Safety Training for UC Irvine

CWA, the UAW and AFSCME are working together to build a joint health and safety committee to better protect workers at the University of California, Irvine. The plan is to develop a joint lab safety training program, and identify and solve other safety issues throughout the university system.

The unions, in meetings with UC Irvine officials, have proposed a comprehensive general lab safety class for all lab workers and UPTC-CWA safety stewards, plus additional three-hour specialized training for chemical hazards, biological hazards, nanotech hazards, laser hazards and radioactive hazards.

These items were discussed at a February meeting of CWA, UAW, AFSCME and UC Irvine representatives. The meeting produced an agreement to mutually develop and conduct safety and health training for small group activity in labs, as well as develop labor safety and health committee language.

Principal investigators, who supervise UPTC-CWA members at work, would work as instructors with union trainers.

At a hearing of the California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board, UPTC-CWA Local 9119, CWA and UAW testified in support of UC Irvine's request for a permanent variance in lab safety standards, based on the addition of several important safety and health protections.

Missing something?

If you don't get CWA's weekly newsletter, you're missing a lot.

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Violence in the Workplace

OUR WORK ENVIRONMENT



How big a problem is violence in the workplace? It's big and getting bigger.

Workers in a wide range of occupations face assault: police and corrections officers, taxi drivers, health care professionals and social workers who may come in contact with violent clients and increasingly, telecommunications workers, flight attendants and retail sales workers who deal with the public and customer complaints.

Other forms of workplace violence include bullying, which is a repeated assault or attack on an individual worker that can cause real harm and distress; harassment, which is considered to be illegal discrimination; and retaliation. All of these behaviors are real workplace hazards that CWA locals are fighting to stop.

Protecting AT&T Technicians from Street Violence

'We'll be working on a box and someone will come up and jump you'

AT&T technicians, always on the streets, are reporting a spike in violence while on the job. "We'll be working on a neighborhood box and someone will come up and jump you," said Willis Ward, vice president and chair of Local 9404's health and safety committee.

Several years ago, a CWA technician who witnessed a shooting became a target after he was seen talking with police following the incident. Soon after, gun-toting friends of the shooter started following AT&T vans.

Leaders from CWA Local 9404 and 9415 pushed AT&T management for a workplace safety agreement to help protect members from street violence. Now, technicians who want to work with a partner must be given one, and if workers have good reason for concern in certain areas, they can refuse an as-

signment without fear of retaliation or suspension. Work is limited to morning hours in defined areas of high crime and monitored during other times of day.

"We know this isn't isolated to our area, but we wanted to set a standard for safety that we hope can be expanded around the state," Ward said.

The dangerous conditions continue to exist, and CWA is pressing AT&T to fully honor and implement these provisions, which now are limited to installation and repair divisions serving Richmond and Oakland, Calif.

"The locals saw a problem, identified a solution and reached an agreement that helps safeguard our members and the community," said District 9 Vice President Jim Weitkamp. "We're continuing to fight for full implementation and safeguards for all workers."

New York City traffic enforcement officers, members of CWA Local 1182, face angry drivers and pedestrians every day. Twelve years of mobilization and lobbying by local union leaders and activists resulted in a law that makes it a felony to assault a TEA.

Our Work Environment: City Streets



Strong New Workplace Violence Law At Kaleida Healthcare

'We worry whether what started on the street is going to be finished in the ER'

Health care workers in New York State's Kaleida network of hospitals and health care centers won a new workplace violence committee and a first-time commitment from Kaleida management to address the issue as part of contract negotiations last year.

Women workers, members of CWA Local 1168/Nurses United and the majority of the workforce at Kaleida, increasingly are the victims of unprovoked violent attacks, from unstable, mentally disturbed or angry patients, and their family and visitors.

Nurses and other health care workers in the Kaleida system have been beaten and lost consciousness, said CWA Local 1168 safety and health director Dana McCarthy. He and others also worry that without strong protections, violence could follow workers into the emergency room.

"We treat victims of gang violence, and a lingering worry is whether what started on the street is



going to be finished in the ER," McCarthy said.

Kaleida's commitment to sit down and address workers' concerns over workplace violence and safety came only as a result of a long contract battle that also ad-

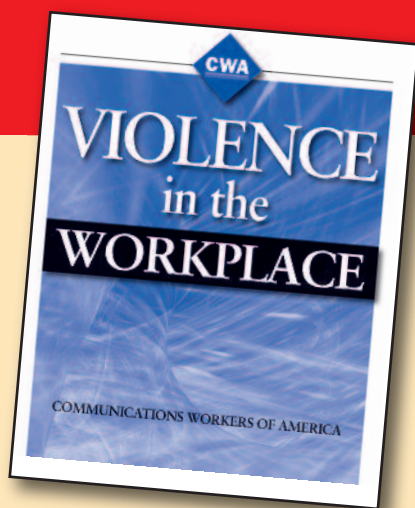
dressed wages, benefits, and adequate staffing, among other issues.

A massive mobilization march last year by more than 4,000 members of CWA Local 1168 and other unions, plus a strike vote, persuaded Kaleida that workers and their de-

New Violence in the Workplace Manual

CWA's Violence in the Workplace manual has just been revised, with new sections on workplace bullying and how to fight back, CWA members' stories about how they're working to make their work environment safer, and new resources to use in your fight for a safe workplace.

Find out more at <http://www.cwa-union.org/pages/education>.



For N.J. Child Protective Services Workers, Violence Comes with the Job

'Sometimes, you really do take your life in your hands'



Taking a stand to keep programs that protect NJ children.

Child care workers face many of the same risks of violence as law enforcement officers. They work in high-crime neighborhoods at all hours of the day, and they don't always know what to expect when entering a home.

This work environment is a fact of life for New Jersey's 5,600 child protective services workers. CWA's New Jersey locals have had to fight for every single protection workers now have to make their lives a little safer.

"It's been a battle every step of the way," said CWA Local 1037 member Catherine Danatos, a child protective services worker for 38 years. "It is only through our union that we've been able to get the protections we have today." Local 1037 represents 3,000 child protective

services workers; Locals 1038 and 1039 represent another 2,600.

When Danatos began her career in the 1970s, social workers in the field had almost no way of calling for help. There weren't cell phones then. It wasn't until the late 1980s that attacking a social worker was made a state criminal offense.

"Because children are involved, our clients can get really emotional. And when drugs are part of the home situation, people often get volatile. Workers have been kidnapped, raped and attacked," she said.

Most of the security protections workers have gained were won through mobilization and building public support for workers' safety. Workers have had to fight for every workplace protection, organizing pe-

CWA state child protective services workers mobilize for job protections and critical child services.



tion drives, picketing during lunchtimes, and holding meetings with Department of Human Resources/Department of Children and Families officials. "Our strong steward network has enabled us to compile the documentation that we have needed over the years to show that what we were asking was necessary for us to do our jobs safely," Danatos said.

It was just a few years ago that the state finally agreed to provide cell phones for workers. And until recently, child protective services workers did not have the right to an escort if they believed that there was

a real potential for danger. "Sometimes, you really do take your life in your hands," said Danatos.

"We now have a 'buddy system,' and the right to have armed Human Service police with us in dangerous situations," she said. Social workers also have been attacked in their offices, so CWA locals pushed for security guards in every office.

But making further gains in safeguarding workers on the job will be difficult, said Local 1037 President Ken McNamara. "Under Governor Christie, we've gotten nothing but the scorn that he has shown for state workers. It's a real shame."

language



A massive mobilization by members of CWA Local 1168 led to a new contract and real protections against workplace violence.

mands were serious.

"Kaleida underestimated our membership, but our mobilization showed them that we weren't going to stand for any take backs," said Local President John Klein.

The local's workplace violence committee has been meeting with Kaleida monthly, to develop a comprehensive policy with specific steps to protect workers from violence. Kaleida has committed to review the committee's recommendations this spring, but Klein says a commitment isn't a guarantee.

"I think Kaleida is moving in the right direction, but it's going to be a struggle to get what we want. Management, unfortunately, puts a dollar cost on everything. But, we're in it for the long haul," Klein said.



CWA members working at West Virginia's corrections and regional jails system, and juvenile services, have a tough job, made harder by staff shortages and jail overcrowding.

A day of stress and a long drive home

In West Virginia, CWA members of Local 2055 work in corrections, juvenile services and at regional jails. They face a tough job every day, one that's getting harder due to staff shortages and overcrowding, especially at the regional jails.

From working long hours to commuting long distances to dealing with inmates at their worst, and even worrying about needle sticks in medical units, these 1,400 CWA members juggle stress and dangerous working conditions.

Following a recent incident where an inmate attempted to disarm a corrections officer, CWA is fighting for a bill that would make this kind of assault a felony.

Media Workers Put Their Safety on the Line

The work environment for journalists and broadcast workers couldn't be more dangerous today. Whether covering demonstrations throughout the Middle East, civil war in Africa or disasters here in the U.S., these CWA members put their lives and sometimes their freedom on the line to tell the world what's happening.

NABET-CWA President Jim Joyce, whose sector represents camera operators, technicians and other workers, said "viewers and

readers don't necessarily realize what it takes to get these stories and how much risk people put into their jobs."

Following last year's earthquake and nuclear plant breakdowns in Japan, NABET-CWA members were on the job, covering those news events. That work took them into hazardous and potentially radiation-contaminated areas, but employers failed to provide the necessary safeguards. As a result, NABET-CWA is

fighting to ensure that affected members are provided adequate medical monitoring and if necessary, treatment.

The Committee to Protect Journalists reported that at least 46 journalists were killed in 2011, mainly in the Middle East and North Africa. Nine online journalists were killed for their work and 179 journalists were imprisoned, as of Dec. 1. Another nine journalists have been killed so far in 2012. The International Feder-

ation of Journalists reported that 106 journalists and media staff have been killed; IFJ includes drivers and "fixers" and support staff in its counts.

TNG-CWA President Bernie Lunzer said "more must be done to stop the killing and to better protect journalists and media workers," including training and better protective equipment in hazardous areas, including gas masks, bullet proof vests and other equipment.

Only in the Aircraft Cabin Can a 'Workday' Equal 16 Hours

Unlike most workers, flight attendants are excluded from coverage of some important federal laws. Their work environment, the aircraft cabin, is exempt from federal health and

If they are fatigued, they can't perform as well. Bruni says flight attendants begin to show signs of exhaustion after flying five legs or about 12 hours. "If you're tired, you don't always think clearly, and that can be a real danger to the aircraft."

Before every takeoff, flight attendants perform vital checks, critical to the safety of the aircraft and passenger. At regional carriers, they also make a weight-balance count which they pass along to the pilot. Knowing how many passengers

are in the aircraft, the seating distribution, and how many seats are not occupied is critical to a safe takeoff.

"You really get exhausted after a shift like that. Eight legs means eight boardings, eight takeoffs, eight landings and eight times to do cabin service."

— Katherine Bruni, president
AFA Horizon MEC

Bruni participated in a major fatigue study by the FAA in 2006 and hoped that it would quickly lead to sensible new limits on working hours. Unfortunately, the report did-



Flight attendants, not yet covered by OSHA, often work up to 16 hours a day.



safety laws and falls under Federal Aviation Administration jurisdiction.

Only recently did flight attendants win the right to Family and Medical Leave Act protections, nearly 20 years after other workers.

Today, flight attendants are fighting for limits on the number of hours they can be required to work in a day. Fatigue is a critical problem for flight attendants which affects the safety of passengers and the aircraft.

Under FAA regulations, flight attendants can be scheduled for up to 14 hours a day, but often work longer hours since there are no strict duty time limits when delays occur. "Some days we fly eight legs, totaling 16 hours in a 24 hour day," said AFA-CWA member Katherine Bruni, president of the AFA Horizon master executive council.

"You really get exhausted after a shift like that. Eight legs means eight boardings, eight takeoffs, eight landings and eight times to do cabin service," she explained. "It's crazy math that we only get paid for the time we spend working from boarding to landing."

Pilots are covered by stricter hour and rest rules, as are air traffic controllers, but Bruni said flight attendants have been excluded because the industry "does not consider us to be in a critical role because we are not at the controls."

As flight attendant first responders, the health and safety of passengers depends on their being alert and calm during emergencies, during turbulence or when the aircraft has to be evacuated.

'Prevention 360' Targets Workplace Injuries in Manufacturing

One result of the economic downturn was a push by management for even greater productivity from workers, often at the expense of workplace safety and health.

To help reduce worker injuries in today's work environment, IUE-CWA Local 84755 initiated a work-centered safety and health initiative at Dmax, a GM plant in Moraine, Ohio, named "Prevention 360."

"Watching shops close and downsize, we have taken a major interest in seeing that our companies are productive and profitable, but that shouldn't come at the expense of increased injuries to our members," said local safety and health director Debra Fisher.

"The point of Prevention 360 is situational awareness, training us about being responsive and staying conscious to the 360 degrees of space that is around us."

The local conducted a thorough review of company processes and procedures, workplace assessments, and job analysis. "The best approach to preventing injuries is to draw on workers' knowledge, to brainstorm together, develop strong safety and health committees, and in partnership with other unions," Fisher said.

Training is key to the program's success, and the union involves



Local 84755 conducts safety training on fall prevention and workplace hazards at Dmax plant in Moraine, Ohio.

workers and managers from many of the 14 other companies where Local 84755 represents workers throughout Ohio. In February, the local held "hazard recognition" training at Dmax, bringing in teams of managers and IUE-CWA members from Tenneco, Dayton Phoenix, Dimco Gray, General Engine Products and other companies.

"We want our members to have a safe workplace

and to return to their homes in one piece," said local president James Winship. Employers are beginning to recognize that our program does produce a safer workplace, he said. "Reducing workplace injuries benefits employers as well."

Everyone in the local — stewards, members, activists, and officers — gets involved. Winship led a "fall prevention" class that helped workers better identify and recognize risks on the job. At Dmax, for example, members often work 12 feet or more above the ground, over big engines and machinery.

"Training is about developing greater awareness of our workplace and what's around us. We need to make sure that we are tied off properly in a harness while working high off the ground" and not follow routines that have become second nature, he said.



In New Mexico, Patient Control is Challenge for Mental Health Workers

There aren't too many jobs more challenging than working in a state mental health facility. These days, those challenges are even tougher, as budget cutbacks and changing treatment philosophies make working conditions even tougher for mental health workers.

When mentally ill or psychotic patients get out of control at New Mexico University Hospital in Albuquerque, it's the job of CWA's mental health associates and mental health techs to physically restrain them. The hospital administration is moving away from using padded restraints or straps and instead has directed workers to keep patients under control.

"Right now we are struggling to keep patients restrained without the usual tools," explained Adam Koontz, a mental health associate for 13 years, and vice president of CWA Local 7076. "It's not easy physically restraining a patient who believes that you are a demon."

For workers, the new policy has meant more injuries, including back injuries, contusions, and concussions. Some workers have been attacked and beaten by patients.

Workers have asked hospital administrators to provide padded shields or some other form of protection the mental health workers can use with an unruly patient, but the hospital has denied the request. "It's not unusual for us to have to hold on to a patient for over an hour," said Koontz.

Workers also requested advanced crisis prevention training, but so far the hospital has trained just one person and hasn't offered any more sessions. Most workers typically work an eight-hour shift for four or five days a week, but for some, putting in more than 100 hours a week isn't unusual.

Patients at the university hospital include children aged 5 to 18, adults, and elderly persons. The average length of a stay for most patients is six to nine days, but Koontz said patients keep coming back because the hospital and the insurance companies focus more on treating the symptoms and not the cause.

"It's really sad that we are throwing people back into the community with very little therapy. The trend is toward more medication and in managing the patient, when what we need is more one-on-one therapy

that is reality-based and can help the patients improve."

Understaffing and other critical issues are not getting attention from hospital administration, nor does the mental health unit benefit from state funds that are being channeled to more profitable parts of the university's hospital system. Many of the buildings they work in are deteriorating and mold is becoming an increasing issue, causing some

workers to suffer with respiratory problems.

Working through their labor-management and safety and health committees, workers are taking their issues to management regularly, but improvements come slowly.



Safe-Patient-Handling Program Reduces Workers' Injuries

Neck and back strain injuries are a common injury for health care workers who assist bedridden patients on a daily basis and often put too much strain on themselves while assisting patients in and out of bed.

Nurses United/CWA Local 1168 members in New York's Kaleida system pioneered a safe-patient-handling "no-lift" program that has significantly reduced injuries to not

only workers, but also patients.

Today, instead of lifting patients, workers won new contract protections that require the use of mechanical lifts. Within 18 months, workers' neck and back strains and sprains dropped by more than 70 percent, and patients' injuries from fractures, fell nearly as much.

Getting the policy in place was a long process. It began in 2000, with newly negotiated ergonomics lan-

guage. This led to the creation of a joint labor-management safety committee whose mandate was to create a safe and health workplace.

"We were lifting patients all the time and we knew that the process had to change," said Local safety and health director Dana McCarthy.

Local 1168 has been working to have its Kaleida program used as a model for safe-patient-handling policy throughout New York State.

Notice Regarding Union Security Agreements and Agency Fee Objections

As a general matter, employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement containing a Union security clause are required, as a condition of employment, to pay an agency fee equal to normal Union dues (and, where applicable, initiation fees). While the wording of these clauses is not perfectly uniform, none requires more than the payment of this agency fee to retain employment.

The Communications Workers of America policy on agency fee objections is the Union's means of meeting its legal obligations to employees covered by Union security clauses and of effectuating those employees' legal rights as stated in the applicable decisions of the United States Supreme Court (including *Beck v. CWA*) and the companion lower court and labor agency decisions. Under the CWA policy, employees who are not members of the Union, but who pay agency fees pursuant to a Union security clause, may request a reduction in that fee based on their objection to certain kinds of Union expenditures.

The policy provides an objection period each year during May, followed by a reduction in the objector's fee for the twelve months beginning with July and running through June of the following year.

Briefly stated, CWA's objection policy works as follows:

1. The agency fee payable by objectors will be based on the Union's expenditures for those activities or projects "germane to collective bargaining, contract administration, and grievance adjustment" within the meaning of applicable United States Supreme Court decisions.

Among these "chargeable" expenditures are those going for negotiations with employers, enforcing collective bargaining agreements, informal meetings with employer representatives, discussion of work-related issues with employees, handling employees' work-related problems through the grievance procedure, administrative agencies, or informal meetings, and Union administration. In the past, approximately 70-75% of the International Union's expenditures have gone for

such activities. The percentages of Local Union expenditures on "chargeable" activities have generally been higher. Among the expenditures treated as "nonchargeable," which objectors will not be required to support, are those going for community service (including participating in charitable events), legislative activity, cost of affiliation with non-CWA organizations, support of political candidates, participating in political events, recruitment of members to the Union, and members-only benefits (including members-only social events). In the past, approximately 25-30% of the International Union's expenditures have gone for such "nonchargeable" expenditures. The percentages of Local Union expenditures on "nonchargeable" activities have generally been lower.

2. Objectors will be given a full explanation of the basis for the reduced fee charged to them. That explanation will include a more detailed list of the categories of expenditures deemed to be "chargeable" and those deemed to be "noncharge-

able," and the independent certified public accountants' report showing the Union's expenditures on which the fee is based. In addition to any other avenue of relief available under the law, objectors will have the option of challenging the Union's calculation of the reduced fee before an impartial arbitrator appointed by the American Arbitration Association, and a portion of the objector's fee shall be held in escrow while he or she pursues that challenge. Details on the method of making such a challenge and the rights accorded to those who do so will be provided to objectors along with the explanation of the fee calculation.

3. Objections for the period of July through June must be sent during May. Objections will be honored for one year unless the objection specifically states that it is continuing in nature. Continuing objections will be honored for as long as the agency fee payer remains in the bargaining unit. Agency fee payers who are new to the bargaining unit, or who are returning to the bargaining unit, may object within thirty days of

receiving this notice. In addition, employees who resign Union membership may object within thirty days of becoming an agency fee payer. Employees filing these objections in either circumstance should so state that circumstance in their letter of objection. New bargaining unit members are to receive this notice prior to any demand being made upon them for the payment of agency fees. If, however, for any reason a new unit member begins paying agency fees prior to the receipt of this notice, he or she may object retroactively to the commencement of such payments and for the duration of the current annual objection period.

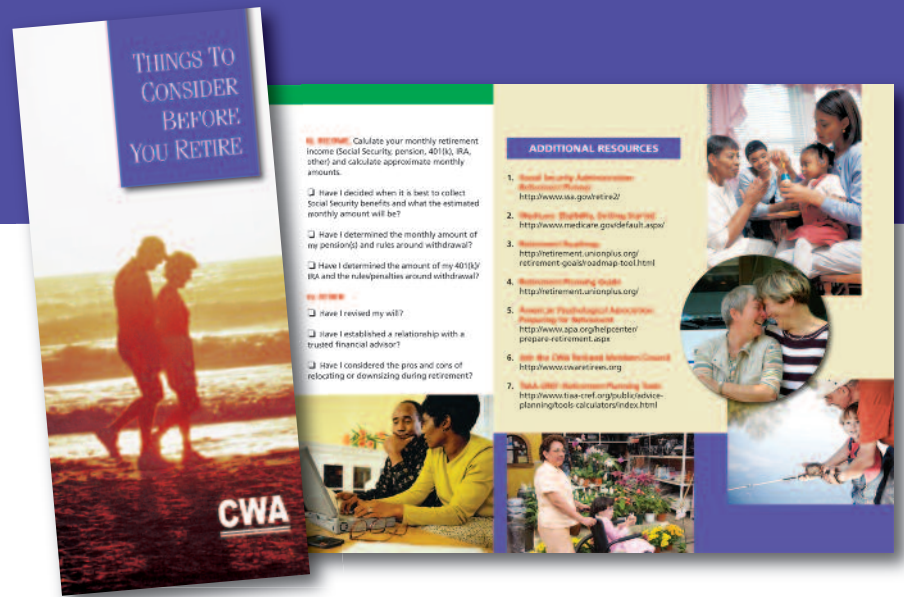
The letter of objection should include name, address, social security number, CWA Local number, and employer. Objections must be sent to the Agency Fee Administrator, CWA, 501 Third Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001-2797.

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Electrical Hazards: An Everyday Danger for Telecom Technicians

Working around electrical power lines is an everyday hazard for thousands of CWA telecom technicians. Ensuring worker safety means comprehensive training, training that emphasizes safe clearance and approach distances for techs working in buckets near power lines.

"With downsizings and cutbacks, we're concerned that employers are pushing techs to work more quickly, possibly causing some to cut corners and not follow proper safety procedures," said CWA Local 1109 executive vice president Chris Calabrese.

These fears were heightened by the death of Local 1109 member Doug Lalima last September. While working in an aerial bucket in Brooklyn, the 37-year-old Verizon lineman came into contact with power lines. Lalima's death is under investigation by OSHA and the local has filed a grievance against Verizon charging that the company failed to provide the lineman with proper training and equipment.



Electrical hazards have been a major concern for locals and CWA's Occupational Safety and Health De-

partment, which has been holding workshops with Verizon and other telecom employers and CWA mem-

Electrocution remains an everyday danger for CWA telecom technicians. Since 2006, at least six techs have died on the job.

bers since 2007 to reduce the risk of electrocution.

The trainings resulted from a settlement agreement CWA reached with the company following four electrocutions of Verizon technicians – two CWA members in Maryland and Indiana and two IBEW members – in an eight-month period from 2006 to 2007.

CWA and the IBEW met with Verizon to discuss changes in education, training, tools and equipment to try to ensure that no one else is killed or disabled by telecom workers' proximity to power lines.

Unfortunately, while CWA has continued training programs, the company's participation dropped off

significantly following Verizon's decision to eliminate its safety and health department in 2009.

The circumstances surrounding Lalima's death are very similar to that of the CWA technician who died from electrocution in 2007.

"Locals have to hold employers accountable to follow through on their commitment to our safety. There's no excuse for cutting corners when it comes to providing adequate training and equipment," Calabrese said.

A CWA technician at AT&T was electrocuted in Detroit in 2010, and following that incident, CWA proposed joint electrical hazards training. The company said no.

Heat Stress, a Burning Issue for Outside Telecom Techs

Last September, Brent Robinson, a Verizon field technician, started feeling sick while installing phone service at a customer's house in Cucamonga, Calif. Working outdoors in 100-105 degree heat, the Local 9588 member called his supervisor and asked to be released to go home. That request was denied, and Robinson continued with the installation.

On route to his next job, Robinson stopped at a grocery store for a cool drink. Feeling worse, he called 911. By the time the ambulance arrived, the tech was unconscious. Medical personnel performed emergency care and he was rushed to the hospital, but it was too late. Robinson, aged 55, died.

His death is tragic. The even greater tragedy is that Robinson's death and other heat stress fatalities are preventable. They should never happen. The warning signs and conditions that can lead to heat stress are recognizable. Since 2010, CWA has been leading a Heat Stress Campaign to educate telecommunica-



CWA is leading a heat stress campaign to provide workers with important information and make sure that employers are following state and federal law.

tions workers about heat stress: how to prevent it, how to identify it and how to ensure the employer is in compliance with state and federal standards and guidelines.

Since last year, more than 500 local safety and health activists have attended training classes in Districts 2-13, 4, 6, 7 and 9. Activists are tak-

ing what they learn back to their locals and training co-workers about the issue that affects so many outside technicians.

In a CWA heat stress survey conducted in 2010, two-thirds of the more than 1,000 respondents, technicians at CenturyLink, AT&T and Verizon, said they had experienced

extreme discomfort from heat while performing their jobs. Three-quarters said their employers had not provided adequate training for working in high heat conditions. Eighty-five percent said employers had not issued work procedures or proper equipment.

"Employers that send workers out in very high temperatures should stress the importance of taking cool-down breaks instead of complaining about how long workers are running the air conditioning in the company truck," said Local 9588 safety and health chair Robert Harris. Under CalOSHA regulations, employees working in extreme heat conditions are entitled to a 10-minute break whenever necessary, or hourly.

"Brent Robinson probably would be alive today had the company listened to his request to be allowed to go home," said Harris. The local filed a grievance with Verizon over the technician's death as well as a complaint with CalOSHA.

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