



**INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS**  
**LOCAL UNION 953 NEWS – DECEMBER 2012**

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*MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!!*

*From the Staff of Local 953*

*Dale Bob Brady Marty*

*Don and Connie*

Brothers and Sisters,

Here it is, the end of another year! The Holiday Season is in full swing and winter is on its way...maybe!! It's the time of the year to look back on what has taken place and make your predictions for what's to come.

I'm sure that we are all glad the elections are over. Time will tell us if we like the results. One thing is for certain, because we are all members of Local 953 and we know the meaning of "solidarity", we can and will, work our way through most anything that somebody throws at us.

Going forward into the year of 2013, all of the states will start putting together their plans for the health insurance exchanges. Each state has the option of deferring the process to the federal government or coming up with their own plans that meet the federal governments criteria to establish the health insurance exchanges. Again, we must wait to see if the exchanges will help to slow down and control the ever rising cost of health care!

Just remember that during this Holiday Season we can help our own struggling economy by looking for and purchasing "*American Made*" products whenever possible. If and when you are out celebrating the season, have fun and make sure you have a sober ride home. Stay safe, so that together, as Union 953 members, we will be ready to meet the challenges of 2013.

Here's to: Hope, Health and Happiness! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

May God Bless us all!

Yours in Solidarity,  
 Dale Blank, Business Manager/Financial Secretary



Dear Brothers & Sisters:

We have negotiated several contracts this fall and continue to work on a few that are due to expire over the next month or so. Many of the same issues that we have been experiencing the last couple of years have made for some tough negotiations. Health insurance premiums and pension fund costs continue to increase and are the main issues along with wages.

We have hopes that the Affordable Care Act will give us some relief on health care issues and primarily on the premium rates. The health care exchanges are currently being created and go into effect in 2014. It has been estimated that there will still be 35 million Americans who will not have health care. There are many uncertainties as to what the effects from this reform will be. At this point, we do not know if health care will be more affordable or not.

On the defined benefit pension, the law requires employers to maintain their pension plans at funding levels that will assure there are enough funds to meet current and future obligations. A plan is considered to be underfunded if the liabilities of the plan (how much money the plan must pay to its current and future retirees) exceeds the assets of the plan (how much the plan is worth today). A few things have happened that have caused the need for increased funding to the pension plans by the employers. A few years ago, when the market crashed and interest rates declined, the plan assets also declined. Retirements that we are currently experiencing are also having a negative impact on the overall funding levels of the plans, due primarily to the lump sum payouts. For years employers did not have to make contributions to the pension plans because they were fully funded or overfunded. Neither the employees nor the Unions are at fault for not continuing

to add to the pension funds during those years. In reality, it does not matter who is at

fault, but what does matter is that the pensions continue to be funded. During negotiations we have seen instances where some employers are contributing upward of 26 percent of the employee's wage to maintain the funding of the pensions. That number is increasing annually along with the continuing increase to health insurance premiums.

I don't bring these issues up to scare you, but instead I bring them up to inform you. These are the issues that we are dealing with when we go to the table for negotiations with the employer. To negate these increased costs, employers have been attempting to suppress wage increases or in some instances decrease other benefits. For the most part, we have been able to stave off these issues and we will continue fighting to do so.

The economy has been improving, but at a slower rate than any of us would like to see. When the markets and interest rates rebound, our pension plan funds should rebound as well. Hopefully, it will be enough to bring us some relief on the pension issues with the employer. For this reason, with the election finally over, we need our representatives to work on both sides of the isle and solve the fiscal cliff issues that face this nation so that we do not see another setback in the economy.

Once again, I would like to thank all of the stewards and committee members who have assisted with negotiations and all the other issues that arise throughout the year. I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year!

In Solidarity,

Martin Sandberg  
Asst. Business Manager

Season's Greetings!

On December 13, 2011, a joint grievance was forwarded to Xcel Energy asserting they had unilaterally implemented changes to the medical plan. No resultant remedy was achieved from the grievance meeting, therefore Arbitration was requested and eventually scheduled for November 27, 2012. On November 27, 2012 prior to the arbitration taking place, a settlement was reached with the Company. The results of the settlement are as follows: For the upcoming year of 2013, the approximate health insurance premiums that a bargaining unit employee can expect to pay for his/her health care will be: Employee-\$8.87/month, Employee Plus 1-\$17.76, Family-\$26.63. It should be noted that at the time of this writing, the final actuarial review had yet to be performed, however, I am fairly certain that these rates will be in effect when the review is completed. As stated, these rates will be in effect only for 2013. You should soon be receiving a communication from the company detailing the final numbers in addition to a brief explanation for the premium change.

On December 6, 2012, the Union was once again able to reach a settlement with the Company regarding employees on standby taking part in a mutual aid assignment. As a result of that settlement, going forward, an employee who is on standby will be allowed to participate in a mutual aid assignment as long as a trade can be found prior to the actual call (final call). In addition to a monetary settlement for the two grievants, the Union was also agreeable to the implementation of the ARCOS Siren Alert. This alert will be sent no later than 30 minutes prior to the actual/final call being made and will relay as much information as is known about the assignment. During normal work hours, the Company will continue to speak directly with the employees. Both sides have also expressed a desire to meet in order to discuss

other mutual aid related concerns. In order to do this, the Union will assemble a Committee that will be comprised of both gas and electric distribution members.

On another subject, as most of you are aware, Xcel Energy unilaterally implemented a new prescription safety glass reimbursement policy. The Union is not in agreement and has requested that this matter be brought before an arbitrator for hearing and decision. At this time, a date has not been set. However, as more information becomes available, it will be shared at the scheduled Regional and Tailgate meetings in your areas.

Recently, the Company notified the Union of its intent to transfer the gas dispatching duties from Local 953 over to Local 23. The Union is not in agreement with the Company's unilateral decision to transfer work that is owned and been a part of the Local 953 jurisdiction for years. Going forward, the Union will exercise its rights to the fullest extent in order to prevent this from occurring.

Lastly, some of our members participated in the Hurricane restoration efforts that are taking place on the East Coast. Again, the members of this Local have demonstrated they have a work ethic that is second to none! I consider it an honor to be a small part of what you people bring to the table. My thanks to you, as well as your families for the sacrifices they made in your absence.

In closing, I wish to extend my very best to you and yours and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Please remember to make personal safety your number one priority!

In Solidarity,  
Robert J. Lahti  
Asst. Business Manager

Happy Holidays!

With 2012 coming to a close and the Holiday Season upon us, it's a great time to look back at the year. Try to focus on the positive things that have happened to you. Sometimes it's easy to get distracted by things that hold us back in life. I would encourage you to look beyond those things, look for the good things in people and hopefully they will find the same in you.

I would like to challenge the Union Membership next year to get involved in something that will better your life. There are plenty of things we can do at work to improve our career...help teach a new worker the best way to do something, get involved in a safety program, be a leader, make suggestions on better work practices, give someone a compliment if they performed well. Remember it doesn't cost you a dime to say "Good Job!"

Thanks to all the people that have helped me with my duties at the Union Hall this past year and also congratulations to all the Apprentices that have completed their training! Please stay involved in the Union!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your family!

Brady Weiss  
Asst. Business Manager

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**"A" MEMBERS ONLY  
IBEW PER CAPITA NOTICE**

Please be informed that at the 38th International Convention of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers held September 16-23, 2011, the delegates representing the entire membership of the IBEW voted to increase the "A" members Per Capita effective January 1, 2013.

Therefore, the per capita to the IBEW of "A" members ONLY will increase one dollar (\$1.00) January 1, 2013. If you pay union dues by check/cash, please add \$1.00 starting in January. "A" Membership Per Capita dues will now be \$30.00 per month. If you are on dues payroll deduction or automatic dues deduction, the one dollar increase will begin January 2013. If you should have any questions or concerns, please contact Don at 715-834-4911, ext. #112.

