RMC
By Eric Wolfe

Maybe it's all the natural light, flooding in from the large windows. Maybe it's the generous spacing of the work stations, or the graceful curves in the desktop design.

But when you walk into one of PG&E's new Resource Management Centers you know you're not in yesterday's office anymore.

"Everybody is very excited about the facility," says Operating Clerk Tina Litts, who came to the Sacramento RMC when it opened in October. "It's all new—new equipment, new carpet, new furniture, it's a wonderful working environment. There's plenty of parking. It's easy to get to."

Maybe one reason the facility is so suitable for human habitation is that PG&E's Site Selection Team included someone who would eventually be working there: Stacy Freeman, at the time an Operating Clerk-Typist from the Building Department in Stockton.

"We toured Sacramento with a broker," says Freeman, who moved to the Sacramento RMC last October. "In one day we looked at 14 buildings in Rockland, Roseville, West Sacramento and Sacramento. The Sacramento building eventually chosen by the company was high on the Site Selection Team's list."

Continued on page 15

Showtime
By Eric Wolfe

It's showtime for Transformation at PG&E. The "vision and design" phases are giving way in 2007 to a "test and train" period that will determine if the company's monumental restructuring program can live up to the company's grand expectations.

For IBEW Local 1245 members, it's not been a spectator sport. Since November of 2005, PG&E has engaged union members in rethinking the fundamentals of utility service in areas ranging from Materials, Fleet and Energy Delivery to Customer Service, Information Technology and Corporate Real Estate.

IBEW members are pitted against each other during an exercise on teamwork at the recent "All Hands" meeting at Weakley Hall.

There's a reason the company wants employee "engagement." "You know more than anybody else how to get the job done," said Local 1245 Business Manager Tom Dalzell, speaking on Dec. 5 to an "all hands" meeting of IBEW members engaged in PG&E Transformation. At the same time, Dalzell noted, "Engagement is an opportunity for employees to influence what will happen in a significant way—an opportunity that isn't always there."

Union members listened closely as PG&E's PMO Director Mike Jones briefly reviewed the company's case for Transformation—industry consolidation, ag-

Continued on page 4

Sierra Bargaining Resumes
A new set of proposals has been exchanged between the Local 1245 Bargaining Committee and Sierra Pacific Power.

The union presented the company with a comprehensive proposal on Jan. 11 in an attempt to resolve the logjam in negotiations. The company responded with a proposal on Jan. 16. "Some of it was positive, some was problematic," Local 1245 Business Rep. Randy Osborn said of the company's proposal.

Additional sessions of federally-mediated bargaining are set for Jan. 22 and Jan. 25, Osborn said.

In an update distributed on Jan. 11, the union bargaining committee reminded members to continue working safely as negotiations proceed. "Keep your head cut in and watch your brother or sister's back. We as your committee understand the frustration we all feel. Please be safe," the committee wrote.

Serving on the union committee with Osborn are Gary Bailey, Vickie Borst, Tom Cornell, Aaron Dorman, Mike Grimm, Reto Gross, Dale Huntsman, Dan Lyday, Jerry McAlister, and Assistant Business Manager Dennis Seyfer.
Mike Saner was hired as a Local 1245 Business Representative effective Jan. 2.

Initiated into the union in 1986, Lamers has worked in the line clearance tree trimming industry for two decades. He has been active in union organizing in the industry and in 2003 ran the union's picketline at PG&E offices in Fort Bragg to protest the utility's use of non-union tree trimming contractors.

His initial assignment will be to serve Local 1245 members in the tree trimming industry. Lamers resigned his Advisory Council and Safety Committee positions at the time he joined the union staff.

Welcome aboard, Carl!

Saner hired as business rep

Mike Saner was hired as a Local 1245 Business Representative effective Jan. 2.

Initiated into the union in 1985, Saner worked as a Subforeman "A" in PG&E General Construction before joining the union staff on a temporary basis in May of 2006.

His initial assignment will be to serve Local 1245 members working under Title 300 of the labor agreement in PG&E Areas 2 and 3 that had been served by Business Rep. Hunter Stern, as well as representing Title 300 members working in PG&E Area 5.

Saner resigned his position on the Local 1245 Advisory Council upon accepting the permanent staff position.

Welcome aboard, Mike!
Nominations in March for Local Union office

The election process will begin in March of this year for officers and Advisory Council, with balloting in June for the new three-year terms.

Complete information on nominations, elections, duties, and qualifications of officers are found in the Local Union Bylaws and the International Constitution. If you do not have copies of these documents, they may be obtained by writing to IBEW Local Union No. 1245, PO. Box 2547, Vacaville, CA 95687.

Offices

The following officers shall be elected in accordance with Article XVI of the IBEW Constitution and Article III of the Local 1245 Bylaws: President; Vice President; Recording Secretary; Treasurer; Business Manager-Financial Secretary; Southern Area Executive Board Member, Central Area Executive Board Member, Northern Area Executive Board Member, and At-Large Executive Board Member. The composition of the areas and at-large group represented on the Board are specified in Article III, Section 6 of the Local Union Bylaws.

The designated Advisory Council seats are listed in Article XIII of the Local Union Bylaws.

Qualifications

Business Manager-Financial Secretary: The offices are combined per Article III of the Local Union Bylaws and must be filled by a member holding an ‘X’ membership (EWBA) as required by the IBEW Constitution.

Members elected to office in the Local Union must be able and available to attend all regular and special meetings and to conduct the affairs of their office without compensation or other expenses other than provided for in Article X of the Local Union Bylaws (L.U. Bylaws Article III, Section 7).

Assistant Business Manager(s) and/or Business Representatives shall not be eligible to hold any elective Unit or Local Union office. They shall, however, be eligible to run as delegates to the International Convention (L.U. Bylaws Article III, Section 7).

To qualify as a candidate for Local Union office or Advisory Council Member, a member must have at least two years’ continuous good standing in the Local Union immediately prior to March 1, 2007. (L.U. Bylaws Article III, Section 9).

Nominations

Nomination of officers and Advisory Council members shall be made under “New Business” at the first meeting of the Units in March 2007 (L.U. Bylaws Article III, Section 8).

In order to be a candidate for any Local Union office, including Advisory Council Member, a member must be present at the Unit meeting where he or she is nominated, or notify the Local Union Recording Secretary, Chris Habecker, in writing on or before March 1, 2007, that he or she will run for a specific Local Union office if nominated (IBEW Constitution Article XVI, Section 10).

A member shall not accept nomination for more than one office of the Local Union (unless combined under the Bylaws). If a member is nominated for more than one office, he or she must immediately declare for which office he or she will be a candidate and decline all other nominations for Local Union office (L.U. Bylaws Article III, Section 9).

Voting

As provided in Local Union Bylaws Article III, Section 11, the May 2007 issue of the Utility Reporter will contain “a list of all candidates for Local Union office, together with a factual record of their activities within the Local Union, committee assignments performed, offices held, and experience gained for and in behalf of the Local Union…”

Ballots will be mailed before June 1, 2007 and must be returned by June 22. To be eligible to vote, you must have paid your dues for March 2007 or before May 31, 2007, per L.U. Bylaws Article III, Section 10.

Further Information

In addition to the Local 1245 Bylaws and the IBEW Constitution, the conduct of labor union elections is also covered by Title IV of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959 (LMRDA).

The U.S. Department of Labor publishes two relevant booklets: Rights and Responsibilities Under the LMRDA and CSRA and Electing Union Officers. These booklets are available by writing the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Elections, 200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room No. North 5619, Washington, DC 20210.

Forging Unity

Great article on Forging Unity in the December Utility Reporter.

I would like to comment on the section that described the challenges the Gas Service Reps are having with the new service trucks with the Knapheide service bodies.

I have seen this as a problem as the trucks keep getting bigger and the areas we drive keep getting tighter and more congested. I see this as safety issue that the company does not want to admit to.

What further alarms me is that now the company is wanting to do a written reminder in discipline (can’t call it positive now) on any avoidable automotive. Seems to me the one that should be disciplined is the one making the decisions on not having the proper equipment for the conditions.

Keep up the great work!

Glenn Pritchard, Oakland, CA

LMUD crew wins praise

Editor’s note: The following letter was received as an e-mail on Dec. 19, 2006.

Hello, I live on Fox Island in the middle of Puget Sound in Washington State. Last Thursday (Dec. 14) we were hit by a brutal wind storm that caused widespread devastation. Winds were clocked near 100 mph. Our member-owned system had major damage from falling trees. Here on Fox Island, we had been out of power for about 5 days as temperatures dipped into the low 20s at night.

Given the extent of damage, I assumed that we would be running on our small generator for many more days. Today (Dec. 19) I ventured out to the main road and was very surprised to see an LMUD (Lassen Municipal Utility District) crew from California helping to restore the system. Amazingly, we are back on the grid tonight.

Please pass on to your crew our sincere and deepest appreciation that they would leave their families during this Holiday week to lend us a hand. I can only imagine the sacrifice that their families made “lending” their loved-ones to us for a few days.

Thank you, again. Merry Christmas and Godspeed to your crew and their families.

Kim Foster, Fox Island, Washington

Sacramento Clerical Unit

Unit 3801, Sacramento Clerical, has new meeting dates and a new meeting location for 2007. Meetings will be held at Round Table Pizza, 3290 Arena Blvd. #600, Sacramento, CA. Phone number is 916-285-6747. Meeting time is 5:30 pm. Meetings will be held the first Thursday of the month on: Jan. 4, Feb. 1, Mar. 1, Apr. 5, May 3, June 7, July 5, Aug. 2, Sept. 6, Oct. 4, Nov. 1 and Dec. 6.

Arlene Edwards
Business Representative

Coming Events

January
26: Service Awards, Chico, CA
27: Service Awards, Redding, CA
27: Stewards Conference, Emeryville, CA
27: Service Awards, Emeryville, CA

February
1: Retirees Club, San Jose, CA
3: Advisory Council, Vacaville, CA
6: Retirees Club, Santa Rosa, CA
6: Retirees Club, Merced, CA
8: Retirees Club, Dublin, CA
9: Service Awards, Petaluma, CA
10: Stewards Conference, Petaluma, CA
10: Stewards Conference, Vacaville, CA
14: Retirees Club, Vacaville, CA
24: Stewards Conference, San Jose, CA
24: Service Awards, San Jose, CA

March
2: Service Awards, Bakersfield, CA
2: Service Awards (Outside Construction), Bakersfield, CA
3: Stewards Conference, Bakersfield, CA
10: Stewards Conference, Sacramento, CA
10: Service Awards, Sacramento, CA
10: Service Awards (Outside Construction), Sacramento, CA
16: Service Awards, Ukiah, CA
17: Stewards Conference, Reno, NV
17: Service Awards, Reno, NV
23: Service Awards, Merced, CA
23: Stewards Conference, Fresno, CA
24: Service Awards, Fresno, CA
30: Service Awards, Eureka, CA
31: Stewards Conference, Eureka, CA

April
14: Service Awards, Stockton, CA
21: Service Awards, Salinas/Monterey, CA
28: Service Awards, San Luis Obispo, CA

May
19: Service Awards, Pacifica, CA
Showtime, from page 1

ing infrastructure, outdated tools and processes. Then came the questions, the sort of questions that have been percolating along with the coffee in PG&E breakrooms for months.

“The company has forecast $95 million in savings—is it real?” asked Mike Scalfani, a Gas Crew Foreman who served on the Transformation team looking at Energy Delivery.

And in arriving at a savings figure, Operating Clerk Kathy Hughes wanted to know, has PG&E “taken into account what the company paid Accenture?”, referring to the nine-figure bill run up by the utility’s chief consultant on Transformation.

Ready to Learn

Despite the occasionally sharpened questions, however, union members showed up ready to learn how they can make the company work better for the customer.

Enter Restructuring Associates, Inc. (RAI), a PG&E consultant that specializes in union-oriented environments.

“Our role is to help you know the right questions to ask. This day is not just about the process of Transformation but about your role in it,” said RAI Associate Michelle DeYoung.

As PG&E begins the test and train phase, union members will be involved in making recommendations on “key deployment and implementation issues for Business Transformation,” DeYoung said. “You’re the subject matter experts.”

DeYoung encouraged members to ask questions, to stay informed.

That’s sometimes easier said than done, according to East Bay Clerical Unit Chair Donna Ambeau. She said that union members in some cases were not being invited to meetings where changes are being discussed:

Special Rates and Premiums At PG&E Effective Jan. 1, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHIFT PREMIUMS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Shift .</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third Shift .</td>
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<td>Sunday Premium .</td>
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<td>Sunday - second shift .</td>
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<td>Sunday - third shift .</td>
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| RELIEF PREMIUM . | $29.16 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUCLEAR OPERATOR LICENSE PREMIUMS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactor Operator .</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certified Fuel Handler .</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sr. Reactor Operator .</td>
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<td>Sr. Reactor Operator - DCPP .</td>
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Following are the special rates effective Jan. 1, 2007:

IRS MILEAGE ALLOWANCE FOR 2007 . | .485 per mile |

REMOTE REPORTING for 2007

Less than 15 miles . | . $19.50 |
15 miles or more . | . $27.25 |

If people are being left out of meetings, DeYoung responded, you need to be proactive about what you need to know and where you need to be. There are alternatives to attending meetings, she noted, “such as phone calls.”

“We’ve had some significant victories through our involvement. PG&E didn’t outsource Fleet. They didn’t outsource Materials.” –Marlayne Morgan

That won’t work,” shot back Ambeau, the most senior engagement team member, now helping to design new processes. “There’s no company phone where I’m working.”

Oops.

But so it goes with Transformation. Grand designs, and a thousand details that can go wrong. Does this mean that employee engagement isn’t worth the candle?

No way, says Marlayne Morgan, assistant to Business Manager Tom Dalzell.

“We’ve had some significant victories through our involvement,” Morgan said. “PG&E didn’t outsource Fleet. They didn’t outsource Materials.” While some jobs, such as meter readers, will disappear through attrition, so far no IBEW members have been laid off, she noted.

Union participation has a larger purpose than just protecting customers against the effects of ill-advised workforce reductions. Many union members engaged in Transformation welcome the chance to reshape the way the company does business. They know the inefficiencies that can take root when employees work “in silos,” with neither the mandate nor the means to look at the bigger picture.

Knocking down silos was the subtext of a morning exercise set up by RAI at the All-Hands Transformation meeting in December. Union members were divided into four groups, and then divided further into subgroups. Groups collected points during a series of tasks, with the goal of helping their team win.

Special Rates and Premiums At PG&E Effective Jan. 1, 2007

SHIFT PREMIUMS

Second Shift . | $1.51 |
Third Shift .  | $3.02 |
Sunday Premium . | $3.02 |
Sunday - second shift . | $4.53 |
Sunday - third shift . | $6.04 |

RELIEF PREMIUM . | $29.16 |

NUCLEAR OPERATOR LICENSE PREMIUMS

Reactor Operator . | $4.83 |
Certified Fuel Handler . | $2.42 |
Sr. Reactor Operator . | $6.04 |
Sr. Reactor Operator - DCPP . | $7.85 |

Following are the special rates effective Jan. 1, 2007:

IRS MILEAGE ALLOWANCE FOR 2007 . | .485 per mile |

REMOTE REPORTING for 2007

Less than 15 miles . | . $19.50 |
15 miles or more . | . $27.25 |
Many union members engaged in Transformation welcome the chance to reshape the way the company does business. They know the inefficiencies that can take root when employees work “in silos,” with neither the mandate nor the means to look at the bigger picture.

Some fought tooth and nail on behalf of their subgroups, others on behalf of the larger group. In the end, the exercise helped participants think about the role of communication in team work, and how broadly to define their “team.” It’s an exercise that could come in handy as they confront the challenging task of integrating PG&E’s many parts into a functioning whole as over 850 PG&E employees and consultants push to complete their work before the Energy Delivery technology “go live” date arrives on July 1 of this year.

Utility Reporter

Puzzling through the exercise on teamwork are, from left, Kevin Krummes, Operating Clerk; Tina Litts, Senior Operating Clerk; Roni Bowling, Senior Operating Clerk; Mark Kollman, Operating Clerk; and (back to camera) Anthony Santos, Work Resource Coordinator.

House Democrats take action

Democrats followed through on their promise of quick action as the new majority party in the US House of Representatives.

During her first two weeks as Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi engineered passage of bills in January that implement recommendations of the Sept. 11 commission, increase the federal minimum wage, enable Medicare to seek discounts on prescription drugs, expand embryonic stem cell research and cut the cost of college student loans. The House also passed new rules that crack down on lobbyists and reinstate pay-as-you-go budgeting rules.

And, in a sharp rebuke to an administration led by oil men who have doled out billions in favors to their patron industry, the House rescinded $14 billion in tax breaks for oil and gas companies and put the money into an alternative-energy development fund.

“In the past two weeks, we have delivered on change. We have shown that the House is not a place where good ideas go to die,” Pelosi said.

Even if the measures make it through the narrowly-divided Senate, it is not clear how many of the Democratic initiatives will get past President George W. Bush, who has fought most of these ideas tooth and nail in the past. Still, after years of inaction on pressing domestic issues, it’s a start.

But it’s no time for Americans to sit back. The country’s economy has been run into the ground and it will take a concerted effort by people who give a damn to figure out how to put things right.

In the wake of the political earthquake that shook up Congress in November, a team of economists, writers and policy experts are trying to focus attention on the most pressing economic issues facing America today. Their “Agenda for Shared Prosperity” will address health care, retirement security, work and family, globalization, and other critical issues.

Since 1980, the US economy has grown at an annual average rate of slightly over 3% a year, but the benefits of this growth have gone overwhelmingly to the richest 10%, and especially to the richest 1%. The Agenda for Shared Prosperity plans to offer alternatives to the failed conservative economic policies that assume that the best thing government can do is enrich the wealthy. Here is how the group describes its top 10 priorities.

1. Health care and retirement security: Guarantee access to affordable health care through employer-provided insurance or a public plan. Assure that retirees receive at least 70% of their pre-retirement income via a supplement to a strengthened Social Security.
2. Fair trade: Invest in new technologies that generate high-quality domestic manufacturing employment. Promote environmental and labor policies to ensure that globalization helps working people in developed as well as developing nations.
3. Rewarding work: Raise and index the minimum wage, guarantee the right of workers to organize unions, and make full employment a central commitment of economic policy.
4. Building America: Invest in the nation’s roads, bridges, dams, water supply, airports, mass transport systems, universal Internet access, and human capital through education and training.
5. Energizing America: Invest in renewable energy to reduce energy dependency and carbon emissions and to create hundreds of thousands of jobs.
6. Balancing work and family: Increase flexible work hours, provide paid family and paid sick leave, and commit more resources to the education and care of children.
7. World-class education for all: Expand education to include high-quality early childhood education and after-school and summer programs; improve teacher quality and shrink classes; make college education available and affordable; expand two-year colleges, adult education programs, and job training and retraining programs.
8. A new security: Ensure that work is a pathway out of poverty; rebuild the nation’s safety net so people do not fall into privation.
9. Managing our fiscal health: Raise revenues fairly, respond to economic downturns, and be fiscally responsible by not escalating government debt relative to the size of the economy over the long run.
10. Opportunity for all: Ensure that America’s core values of opportunity for all are embedded in our economic and social programs.

SharedProsperity.org, will provide access to the various reports and analyses and offer links to relevant material.
By Ron Cochran

Effective January 14, 2007, there are new OSHA Crane Certification Requirements. The Cal-Nev JATC is offering a crane certifying course and written test. The first training class will be held at the Cal-Nev JATC in Riverside, CA on Jan. 22-25, with a test Jan. 26.

There will be classes scheduled in Northern California in the springtime. Additional information on the new OSHA crane certification requirements can be found on-line at www.dir.ca.gov/oshsb/mobileandtowercrane/textbox-consider.pdf.

**Safety**

Local 1245 hosted the Dec. 6 Joint Safety meeting. Partners at the meeting were Local 47 and the NECA contractors. Topics discussed were accidents, near misses and prevention. The safety sub-committee also presented proposed changes to the safety manual for the Joint Safety Committee to vote on. There were members missing and the vote was tabled until the March 29 meeting. The next meeting will be in Riverside, CA, at the Cal-Nev JATC building. Listed below are the recommended changes:

- 2.20 (b) 3. – The Dielectric testing on gloves, sleeves, blankets, hoods, mating and line hose will be performed following “ASTM” standards on electrical equipment for workers gloves, sleeves will be changed out on a 90-day cycle. Blankets will be changed out on a 180 day cycle.
- 7.04 (c) Whenever an employee enters a manhole, vault, or similar structure, they shall make an inspection, including heat scan, to determine if any hazardous conditions exist. Appropriate safeguards shall be applied as required prior to the performance of any work.

**Cal-Nevada JATC Report**

The JATC Trustee Board made a policy change to allow apprentices to travel out of the jurisdiction with the crew they are with when working on storm work. This policy change went into effect Dec. 14, 2006. Employers must notify the Cal-Nev JATC director before departing.

We have secured a limited use rental agreement for the SMUD training facilities on Hedge Road in Sacramento, CA. It is the intent of the Cal-Nev JATC to use the SMUD facility for the Northern California Saturday Schools. We are working to move from the existing facility in the first quarter of 2007. This is an excellent facility and we’re looking forward to this new working relationship with SMUD and their apprenticeship training staff.

Local 1245 has appointed Jesse Frieling to the JATC Subcommittee. Mr. Frieling will stand in for me as needed.

We currently have 371 apprentices registered in our JATC program. We have 2 traveling apprentices working in our jurisdiction. There are 74 apprentices working out of Local 1245, and 238 are working out of Local 47. Ten are working out of Local 396. Fifty-one are off of work (39 are due to lack of work & 12 are due to various personal reasons). We graduated a total of 37 apprentices to Journeyman Lineman in 2006. We have graduated 2 so far this year. We currently have an orientation/climbing class in progress. We started the class Jan. 8, with 14 individuals attending. We indentured 158 apprentices into the program in 2006. We have 37 traffic signal maintenance apprentices registered: 7 are working for Republic Electric in Local 1245’s jurisdiction; 30 are working for Republic Electric in Local 47’s jurisdiction.

**Other News**

First Aid & CPR is the 2nd Saturday of every month in Riverside and Sacramento. Any member can attend.

Mileage-Subsistence (5.2a) grievances pending: The Council on Industrial Relations rendered a decision that would raise the subsistence payments to $50 per day as of Dec. 1, 2006. NECA refused to pay on grounds of “Most Favored Nations” clause (H & M didn’t have to pay). We met in Riverside on Dec. 18. Proposals were exchanged with no resolution. We were not asking for the $50 per day. We were asking for subsistence for each time directed to work. I met briefly with the NECA Chapter Manager and Local 47 on Jan. 8. The discussion became heated and unproductive almost immediately. This probably will go back to CIR in February and possibly end up in court.

We were able to organize four contractors recently. Grace Construction, M3 Electric, Ron Hill Construction and Republic Electric Outside Line agreement. Grace Construction targets substructure, civil and substation work. M3 Electric was successful on an upcoming light rail project in the Sacramento area. Republic was successful in a SMUD bid doing GO95 & GO165 work. Ron Hill Construction targets civil projects, power plant work and now substation work. We are working on organizing three more contractors.

Unit Examining Committee was formed within the Outside Line unit to administer Journeymen exams as the IBEW Constitution and Local 1245 Bylaws set forth.

2.12 An “Examination” shall include experience rating tests if such examination shall have been given prior to the effective date of this procedure, but from and after the date of the procedure, shall include only written and/or practical examinations given by a duly constituted Outside Construction Local Union of the IBEW. Reasonable intervals of time for examinations are specified as thirty-nine (39) days. An applicant shall be eligible for examination if he has three and one-half (3½) year’s experience in the trade.

Outside Line Policy 22 Unit Examining Committee is: Robert “Bubba” Avery (Chairman), Casey Kelley (Vice-Chairman-alternate), Jesse Frieling, and Breck Smith. Some of the committee members will be traveling to our sister Local 47 for a field trip to observe how they run their committee meetings and testing in January of 2007. This effort is to be completed with Section 22 of the collective bargaining agreement.

**Article II**

The local union has drifted slightly away from administering parts of the Union Referral System. As of Jan. 1, 2007, the collective bargaining agreement will be followed as agreed in the contract. This is fair and consistent for all members.

2.11 “Resident” means a person who has maintained his permanent home in the above defined geographical area for a period of not less than one year or who, having had a permanent home in this area, has temporarily left with the intention of returning to this area as his permanent home.

**Wellington – PG&E AMI Project**

We recently manned up a job for Wellington to install Data Collection Units (DCUs) on poles, towers, and light standards this is non-traditional work for us. We had two Journeymen, Tim Riblett and Terry Dollarhide, take the calls and they did a great job. The part of the project they’re working on in Bakersfield, CA, is done. TTR and Grace Construction are working on the substation equipment and Canus is doing the commission testing. There will be pieces of this work to do over the next five years. At the peak of this project we can expect to have 90 members of several different job classifications working for different contractors on this project.

**Member Down Fund**

At our last unit meeting we took a collection for one member’s family. The member had passed in a terrible accident. There was an idea to start a payroll-deducted fund to help with these kinds of unfortunate events. The rough idea is to contribute 5 cents for every hour worked to a trust fund that would pay a set amount to a family or member in need. We would first ask many questions to see if this would be possible and legal. I have asked NECA to help us with payroll deduction questions. We will gather information and present it to the rank and file for their vote. We have had very strong support thus far.

Ron Cochran is Senior Business Representative for IBEW Local 1245.

**Bargaining class at Harvard**

In preparing for the 2009 contract negotiations, Business Manager Tom Dalzell in December sent Senior Business Rep. Ron Cochran to a class on Interest-Based Bargaining at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass.

“It was very informative and helpful to me. Interest-Based Bargaining can be used as a very effective tool in negotiations,” said Cochran. He noted that the local union is starting a contract proposal file to collect ideas for bargaining.

“Our business manager has expressed several ideas for the next negotiations. One of the ideas is to have more Outside Line members involved in the process at the table and on subcommittees for fact finding,” said Cochran. “This will help in several ways, both immediate and for the next generation with these line hands getting a taste of what goes on at the negotiating table.”

Ron Cochran at Harvard.
Union trees at City of Lodi

By Ray Thomas

With Tom Dalzell’s strong emphasis on organizing, Local 1245 could not pass up the opportunity to represent five hard-working Trees, Inc. Line Clearance Tree Trimmers performing contract work for the City of Lodi electric utility.

What we discovered when we first visited these crews, was that they were underpaid compared to their union counterparts performing line clearance tree trimming in California, but even worse, all but one of these employees, family coverage was simply out of reach.

With their new union agreement, the affordability of health care benefits for these employees and their families has been addressed.

On Jan. 4, these Trees, Inc. employees voted 5 to 0 to accept their newly negotiated labor agreement. Highlights are:

- Term: January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2008.
- Wages: Increases that bring these employees to parity with line clearance work being performed by signatory contractors on PG&E properties. Increases in 2007 range from a low of 5.8% up to 10.3%.
- Vacation: New contract allows for 3-weeks of vacation, an additional week over prior accrual.
- Employer-funded Money Purchase Pension Plan.
- Health and Welfare: All Health and Welfare benefit premiums (medical, dental and vision) to be fully paid by the employer effective February 2007.

Trees, Inc. realized the value of these employees and stepped up to the plate during negotiations. We’re very pleased that all of these employees and their families will have comprehensive health and welfare benefits provided for them.

That sycamore’s coming down

A sycamore tree that had dropped limbs in the past prompted a homeowner in Burney, Ca. to request removal. The job was handled by two experienced line clearance tree trimmers for Davey Tree: Top Foreman William Stock, a 14-year union member, and Top Climber Jose Vargas, a two-year union member. Vargas, working from the bucket, used rope to rig limbs to be removed, while Stock safely guided the limbs to the ground, avoiding the high voltage lines and a metal shed below the tree.

PG&E Troubleman garners Mielke award for volunteerism

Jesse Cottonham, a Troubleman in Daly City and 22-year member of IBEW Local 1245, has won PG&E’s prestigious Frederick W. Mielke award. Cottonham won the award jointly with his wife, Pally, a senior compliance consultant for PG&E.

The Mielke award, named for PG&E’s former CEO, recognizes employees who make a difference through volunteerism in their community. The Cottonhams were recognized at a Nov. 15 ceremony for their efforts at mentoring kids at their church’s Champions Youth Ministry.

The Cottonhams teach bible study, coach basketball, plan field trips, hold workshops and work with the children’s families.

“Do you spell love? T-I-M-E,”

Jesse told PG&E@Work. “It goes to some of the problems that these kids have, that the parents have not been able to spend the time with them that they need.”

Local 1245 congratulates the Cottonhams on their contribution to the community, and on receiving the Mielke award.
The joint IBEW/PG&E Barehand Committee last October traveled to the ESMO conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where they joined 2000 utility professionals from 40 countries. ESMO, which is short for Engineering Safety & Maintenance for Overhead Lines, focuses on the practical, hands-on aspects of construction, operation, maintenance and safety of overhead and underground transmission and distribution lines. The conference featured two days of outdoor field demonstrations, exhibits, and a two-day indoor exhibit area.

Union Barehand Committee Members Joe Ferreira, Ken McClure, myself and Local 1245 Assistant Business Manager Howard Stiefer, along with PG&E members John Parks, Chuck Stinnett, Scott Rose, and Eric Barron put on a demonstration that completely awed the industry. With the aid of PJ’s Helicopters, two members of the committee installed and removed vibration dampers and armour rod on the 115kv H structures. These work procedures were accomplished with the line being energized.

The new Sky Chair that PG&E and IBEW developed was utilized to showcase a work procedure that no one in the industry except PG&E is doing.

Sky chair procedure wows industry conference

By Russ Rylee
Photos by Walt Posey

Russ Rylee and Joe Ferreira changing vibration damper on energized 115kv line while Jim McAdams observes from pole top.
LEFT: Russ Rylee and Joe Ferreira ready for take off in sky chairs with barehand suits on.

ABOVE: Russ Rylee, left, and Joe Ferreira looking relaxed.

BELOW: Russ Rylee on left holds on the energized conductor while Joe Ferreira installs vibration damper.

BELOW: Jim McAdams prepares to be transported.

Jim McAdams GC lineman demonstrating PG&E’s long line pole transfer.

Helicopter transporting Russ Rylee and Joe Ferreira to job site.
**Units**

**OUR UNION’S MEETINGS AND THE PEOPLE WHO RUN THEM**

From its earliest days Local 1245 was a large union spread out over a vast territory. Units were created by the founders to knit the union together. Our units have been an on-going exercise in democracy ever since.

Units are the union’s ultimate source of strength—the place where unity is forged one meeting at a time. Units are also the starting place for individual members to exert their power. Units provide each member a way to influence union policy, approve or disapprove union initiatives, and nominate leaders.

In June of this year, all 102 units of IBEW Local 1245 will elect unit officers (except for five bi-monthly units that don’t meet in June and will have to schedule a different time). If you’ve been a member in good standing for six months at the time of the election, you are eligible to run for Unit Chair, Vice Chair or Recorder. Maybe you’ve even been considering it, but you’re not sure what’s involved.

The following story, adapted from an essay written by former Executive Board member James Wilburn in 2005, gives an overview of unit meetings and how they are conducted. Check it out. Maybe this is the year you make your mark as a unit officer!

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A labor union cannot be effective unless it has informed members who know how to participate. Unit meetings offer members a way to learn what is going on, and also a way to express their views. Local 1245 has a set of rules to keep meetings orderly, and to assure that members’ rights are respected. Each unit has its own traditions in the way unit meetings are conducted, but it is the responsibility of the unit officers to use the rules to maintain order and protect the rights of the members.

Unit meetings use parliamentary procedure, a common approach that assures everyone’s rights are respected. Robert’s Rules of Order is the basic handbook of parliamentary procedure, and Local 1245 units use a variation on these rules as follows:

1. Opening
2. Roll Call of Officers and Approval of Minutes
3. Communications and Bills
4. Reports of Executive Board and Officers
5. Propositions for Membership
6. Reports of Candidates
7. Balloting and Voting for Candidates
8. Obligation of Candidates
9. Reports of Business Manager, Delegates and Committees
10. Reports of Accidents, Sickness, or Death of Members
11. Unfinished Business
12. New Business
13. Good of the Union
14. Closing

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**OPENING**

“I respectfully request for the efficient management of business that you give undivided attention to all matters legally brought before you. I now declare this meeting of IBEW open for all business legally presented.”

This is how Local 1245 meetings begin. Members are to pay attention. Business must be presented in a legal manner. Put simply, the chair asks the members to follow the rules.

The members have now become a deliberative assembly—a gathering of people to conduct the assembly’s business. Members present ideas courteously. Others listen respectfully.

OK, maybe this doesn’t exactly describe your unit meeting. Sometimes you can hear music from the bar in the next room. Sometimes members make wisecracks and rib each other during the meeting. And when the pizzas arrive, business can simply fall apart for a few minutes.

But the basic idea still holds true: you’re there for a purpose. You discuss topics one at a time, in the proper order. After the catcalls and joking subsides, when the appropriate time comes, each member gets a chance to speak. The minority is heard. And, when votes are needed, the majority prevails. That’s a deliberative assembly.

**ROLL CALL OF OFFICERS AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

First, it is established that the officers are present. The unit chair must declare that a quorum is present. A quorum is the least number of members present required to conduct business legally. In most cases this is 7 members, though in some locations it is 5.

At the chair’s invitation, the notes of previous meeting (“the minutes”) are read by the recorder. The minutes become an official record of the unit’s meetings, so it is important that members view them as accurate. The chair asks, “Are there any corrections or additions to the minutes?” If there is no response, the chair may say, “Hearing no corrections, the minutes are approved as read.” This method is called “unanimous consent.”

On the other hand, if members make corrections to the minutes, they are noted by the recorder. When there are no more corrections, the chair may say, “Hearing no further corrections, the minutes are approved as corrected.”

**COMMUNICATIONS AND BILLS**

Local units of IBEW 1245 seldom use this heading. The Executive Board handles most communications and bills, although units control small amounts of money in their unit fund. Expenditures can be reported on at this time.

**REPORTS OF EXECUTIVE BOARD AND OFFICERS**

At this time, members consider the report from the previous month’s Local 1245 Executive Board meeting. The report may be read aloud, or simply passed around for members to read as the meeting continues.

Part of the Executive Board report is routine—business the Board must conduct according to the law, the IBEW Constitution, Local 1245 Bylaws, or local union policies. The membership has no input on these operational matters; they are simply reported for
REPORT OF ACCIDENT, SICKNESS OR DEATH

This is the time to report on members who have suffered accident, sickness or death. The name and headquarters should be included in the minutes.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The unit recorder screens previous minutes for unit business which has not been concluded and reports this to the chairperson, who then sees to it that the members have a chance to act upon it. Any member may make a “point of order” if an item has been overlooked. Robert Rules of Order restricts the type of items that fall under this heading. In most cases, such business is more appropriately handled under “reports”.

NEW BUSINESS

Nomination, election or installation of officers occurs during News Business. Election of Local 1245 officers, Executive Board members and Advisory Council members occur at three-year intervals. Nominations for these positions are made at the March unit meetings. Unit officers are nominated and elected by the unit meetings during New Business at the June meeting.

New Business is also the time to introduce a new proposal for the unit to consider. There can be no discussion on any subject until a motion has been made, properly seconded, and repeated by the Chair.

GOOD OF THE UNION

This is the time members may voice any concerns that could not be raised during earlier parts of the meeting. This is a time for reports by anyone who has information that may be relevant to the group. Grievance issues may be reported for informational purposes or to obtain answer on contractual questions. But if a “gripe” session begins, the chair or the business representative may refer the matter for further discussion outside of the unit meeting so that the meeting may be brought to a timely conclusion.

CLOSING

When business is concluded, the chair and recorder make sure that a copy of the attendance register and a copy of the minutes are forwarded to the Local Union Recording Secretary. The chair then asks the members to rise and officially concludes the deliberative assembly with the following words:

“With the business of the present meeting being concluded, I declare this Unit Meeting of the Local Union duly and legally closed until our next regular meeting unless specially called. Our next regular meeting will be on (date).”

Former Executive Board member offers guidance for unit leaders

This story was prepared with assistance from James Wilburn. Initiated into the IBEW in 1955, Wilburn became a Communications Technician for Pacific Gas & Electric in 1962. He served as a shop steward, recorder and chair for Unit 1111 in Fresno, and on various ballot and election committees, as well as the 1973-74 PG&E Negotiating Committee. He served on the Executive Board in 1976. After going on long-term disability, Wilburn earned a Master’s Degree from California State University, acquiring knowledge of parliamentary procedure along the way. Brother Wilburn provided this story on unit meetings to the Utility Reporter late in 2005. We publish it this month with the hope that it might encourage members to consider participating in Local 1245 as unit officers.
AL SANDOVAL MEMORIAL COMPETITIVE SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

The purpose of this contest is to provide a grant in aid for scholarships to colleges and junior colleges, thereby making financial assistance toward the attainment of a higher education.

1. The grant will be as follows: Five hundred dollars ($500.00) per year, for up to four (4) years, as long as a C (2.0) average is maintained and the parent maintains their membership in good standing in Local Union 1245.

2. In order to be a candidate in this contest, you must be a son or daughter, natural, legally adopted or a legal ward of a member of Local Union 1245. You must also be a high school student who has graduated or is graduating in (the year of the contest). A copy of your diploma or a letter from your high school stating that you will graduate in 2007 must be attached to your scholarship application.

3. The Scholarship Grant will be made only to that candidate who intends to enroll full-time in any college certified by their State Department of Education and accredited by the Local Accrediting Association.

4. Applications may be secured by addressing the Recording Secretary of Local Union 1245 or by calling the Union Office or by using the form printed in the Utility Reporter or downloaded from the IBEW Local 1245 website.

5. Checks will be paid directly to the college upon presentation of a grant application.

6. All applications shall be accompanied with a written essay, not to exceed five hundred (500) words, on the subject designated by the Executive Board.

7. Essays should be submitted on 8 1/2” x 11” paper, one side, preferably typed and doubled spaced with applicant’s written signature at the conclusion of the essay.

8. Applications and essays must be mailed to International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, AFL-CIO, Local Union 1245, P.O. Box 2547, Vacaville, California 95696, by registered certified mail only, and be postmarked no later than the first Monday in March of each year (March 5, 2007).

9. Each year the scholarship shall be presented at the Advisory Council meeting in May: the Judge and a guest and the recipient and parents shall be invited, at Local Union expense, to present and receive the Scholarship Award.

A suitable trophy or plaque shall be purchased by the Local Union to be presented to the scholarship recipient.

NOTE: The topic for the 2007 Al Sandoval Memorial Competitive Scholarship essay is: How are our union members’ plans to retire impacted by retiree medical premiums?

LOCAL 1245 TRADE AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOL GRANT

The purpose of these grants is to provide aid to the children of members to attain a trade or technical education.

1. The grants will be as follows: Five hundred dollars ($500.00) per year, for up to two years for two candidates, as long as a passing grade is maintained, and a parent maintains membership in good standing in Local Union 1245.

2. In order to be a candidate in this contest, you must be a daughter or son, natural, legally adopted or a legal ward of a member of Local Union 1245. You must be a high school student who has graduated or is graduating in the year of the contest. A copy of your diploma or a letter from your high school stating that you will graduate in the year of the contest must be attached to your application. Additionally, a letter of recommendation from your vocational teacher, department head, or school principal must accompany the application.

3. Applications may be secured by addressing the Recording Secretary of Local Union 1245, by calling the Union Office, or by using the form printed in the Utility Reporter or downloaded from the IBEW Local 1245 website.

4. The grant will be made only to a candidate who intends to enroll in any industrial, technical or trade school, other than correspondence schools, which are accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSC).
Retirees fill up chapter meetings

The Local 1245 Retirees Club is gaining traction as retirees gear up for a meeting with PG&E on Feb. 13 to discuss their serious economic situation.

The East Bay chapter, meeting in Dublin, attracted a record-breaking crowd of 18 to its January meeting.

“Some great ideas were tossed around,” reported Chapter President Mike Silva. “A union brother I worked with years ago volunteered to try to start a retiree chapter in Sonora.”

A volunteer was successfully recruited to make “reminder” phone calls to retirees the day before the monthly meetings—reminding them to attend.

In Santa Rosa, President Larry Mead led a discussion on the agenda for the upcoming Feb. 13 meeting with PG&E. Chapter members also discussed the issue of proxy voting at this spring’s PG&E Shareholders meeting.

Art Fahnner discussed the need to have retiree pensions increased the same percentage as the workers get each year in order to maintain the value of retiree benefits.

In Merced, Mike Bonds served as chapter president pro-temp to an overflow crowd on Jan. 9. Again, the primary topic of discussion was the up-coming meeting with PG&E on Feb 13.

Chapter members resolved to “continue what’s necessary” to achieve their Mission Statement, which calls for the “reinstatement of our health care benefits and an annual cost of living adjustment” on pension checks.

The Merced Chapter also discussed the “lack of voting rights for retirees on the many issues affecting them.”

Executive Board approves recruitment letter

The Local 1245 Executive Board in December approved a request from the Local 1245 Retirees Club to assist recruitment efforts.

The Executive Board approved a first-class recruitment letter to all retired members for whom the union has an address. The letter will invite former retired members of the union to join the Retirees Club.

The Retirees Club has experienced rapid growth in the past two years as retirees come to grips with rapidly escalating costs for medical insurance. Retirees have also become increasingly concerned about the lack of cost-of-living raises in their pension checks.

Chapters have been added over the past two years in Vacaville, Santa Rosa and Merced, joining previously-existing chapters in San Jose and Dublin.

The recruitment letters are tentatively scheduled to be mailed sometime in February.

Membership dues, just $36 per year, entitle club members to:

- A subscription to the Utility Reporter
- A life insurance policy of $1000 ($500 for a member’s spouse)
- A variety of discounted products and services through Union Plus
- Access to a credit union
- Access to dental plan

But most of all, membership in the club gives retirees a way to amplify their voice as retirees seek financial relief from PG&E.

If you’re not a member, do something about it! For membership information, call Local 1245 Office Manager Tonya Alston at 707-452-2718.

Local 1245 members assist Pacific Northwest

Many IBEW Local 1245 members were on the job in the Pacific Northwest in late December after a major storm knocked out power to 1.5 million customers.

Some 80% of Local 1245 members working for Outside Construction contractors were dispatched to the Northwest beginning Dec. 15, according to Senior Business Rep. Ron Cochran. PG&E sent 15 General Construction crews. Sierra Pacific Power sent a five-man crew from Reno and a 4-man crew and a mechanic from Carson. Sacramento Municipal Utility District chipped in with crews, as did Lassen Municipal Utility District (see letter, page 3).

Asplundh Tree sent Local 1245 line clearance tree trimmers to help with tree removal in the storm-damaged areas.

The storm hit late on Dec. 14. Winds were clocked at 113 mph near Mount Rainier.

Giant bags of loot

Wall Street giant Goldman Sachs threw gigantic bags of money at its bankers, traders and stockbrokers late last year—lavishing them with more than $16.5 billion in bonus loot, the most ever doled out by a Wall Street firm.

Between regular salary and bonuses, the average pay of Goldman employees will be a mind-numbing $622,000 this year—and that includes all the low-end workers.

At the top end of the pay scale, it has been reported that Goldman was likely to pay a “golden 25” managers, bankers and traders at least a cool $25 million each.

But a source close to the firm told The Washington Post that some of the top performers may actually get four times that.

Health Care Poll

Eight out of 10 voters statewide believe government should be responsible for assuring all Californians get access to affordable health coverage, according to a new Field Poll.

The survey also found that while a majority of voters are satisfied with the current system of coverage, there is much anxiety about losing coverage in the future and not being able to pay the costs of a major illness or injury. Indeed, 77% said they worry that they might not be able to pay for a major injury or illness.

“The fact that 81% of voters believe the government should take responsibility for access is extraordinary,” Ruth Holton-Hudson, director of public policy for the California Wellness Foundation, told the San Francisco Chronicle. “And the support was across the board—Republicans and Democrats, all age and income categories.”

Last year the California legislature passed historic legislation that would have provided health insurance to all Californians, financed in part by eliminating the enormously wasteful bureaucracy that accompanies the private insurance industry. However, the legislation was vetoed by Gov. Schwarzenegger.

On Jan. 8, Schwarzenegger put forward his own $12 billion plan to require all Californians to obtain medical insurance, while helping the poorest to afford it.

Schwarzenegger’s plan was dramatic in scope, but many leading consumer advocates, academics and business leaders said they feared that it was inadequately financed and would shift more responsibility for healthcare to families while unintentionally encouraging businesses to drop or downgrade the coverage they now offer.

It is not clear whether the governor and the legislature can craft a mutually-acceptable proposal. But the longer the problem goes unresolved, the more Californians worry.
Tailboards and cell phones
By Art Torres

Without effective communication we are pretty much alone and in the dark.

The who, what, where, when, and how of things is vitally important in knowing our role in our immediate environment. Imagine an electrical or gas crew embarking upon a job with no direction, no purpose.

Prior to the commencement of a job it is vitally important to have a crew meeting, commonly known as a "tailboard." During this meeting the following items should be discussed:

- Scope of the job
- What will be de-energized
- What will remain energized
- Grounding points
- Clearance points
- Who will be doing what
- Identification or labeling of equipment that will remain energized
- Crew leader making sure that everyone understands the tailboard
- The usage of cell phones

Cell phones are a thorn in my butt. Sure they are a great tool, but used inappropriately they can have very serious consequences for safety. That’s why cell phone usage should be discussed as part of the tailboard.

Most crews are composed of people with varying degrees of experience. From the groundman or helper all the way up to the foreman, it is crucial that everyone understands the scope of the job. We as electrical workers, with years of experience, sometimes take for granted many aspects of the job that for the inexperienced person could be dangerous. Never overlook the obvious.

I’ll say it again: communicate. Make sure the entire crew is on the same page. If you don’t understand, ask! I’m sure you’ve all heard the saying, “There’s no such thing as a dumb question—the only dumb question is the one not asked.”

This list of tailboard topics does not cover any and all situations. It is merely a starting point for the crew. As the day progresses the status of equipment could change. When that happens, it is vital that every be “cut-in” to the change.

Communicate.
The entire crew should also be made totally aware of what’s hot and what’s not. Electricity is an invisible phenomenon. We can never take anything for granted. Test everything, if it’s not grounded treat it as energized.

Let’s be safe.

Don’t be an egg!
By Keith Hopp

Reorganization. Mergers. Corporate takeovers. In our industry, times have changed and are now changing even faster. But where is safety in this process?

With all the distractions of fast-paced corporate transformation, safety can seem to take a backseat. New tasks with little or no training. Issuing new tools and communication equipment without testing if it works in the field.

We are told that if 80% of change works, they will fix the 20% as they go. According to this way of thinking you have to break a few eggs to make an omelette. Achieving 80% may be fine for paper and ideas, but it will never be fine as far as safety is concerned.

Don’t be an egg! Stand up for safety while you still can. If you don’t, you may not have the legs to do so in the future.

Check out the safety information on our website: www.ibew1245.com/safety-section/safety.html

An old idea that works like new
By Bob Burkle

The other day, a lineman brought up an issue with me about Ceylon poles. In Santa Clara, we have transmission poles, many of which are Ceylon that cannot be reached with the aerial trucks in our yard. So, there were two issues that were of importance to this lineman: climbing Ceylon poles (especially tall ones) and having equipment that matched the plant.

As a lineman myself, I could empathize with both subjects. As unit chairman and member of the Safety Committee, I wanted to guide this lineman in the way that would best address these issues.

It occurred to me that utilizing the suggestion box might very well be my best recommendation to this lineman. The suggestion box may be an old idea, but sometimes this old idea can still obtain results more effectively and with less strain than a whole bunch of misdirected energy. Let me explain.

Suggestion boxes have been around for many years. Sometimes they are the butt of jokes and cartoons. But organizations that make the decision to set up a suggestion box have already made the related decisions to put the information in a record and to hold themselves accountable to have given every idea proper consideration. If you are an individual who has a concern, using the suggestion box can be the first step in bringing about change.

Of course you can take issues to your union steward, who has a responsibility to consider them. But every one of us can make a difference and sometimes we can rely on ourselves to make those changes that we see a need for. Safety issues that are important enough to worry about should be given the time it takes to write them down and put in a suggestion box. After doing that, you may also provide a copy to your union steward. This will allow your union representative to follow the process and ensure it receives the attention it deserves.

What happens after that?
A suggestion may be made anonymously or it may be made with reply requested. If it’s a near miss, a suggestion box is the perfect place to have complete anonymity, which is a huge issue when it comes to near misses.

But in other situations, using your name has definite advantages. It puts the whole workforce on notice that an issue has been raised and must be addressed. If you can do that much, you’ve done your part to make change happen.

What happens when a suggestion is placed into the suggestion box? Every suggestion box has a protocol that goes with it, as to who opens it, how often, and how the documents inside are recorded and routed. Every document that enters the box, hits the “system” that is already in place. The system is designed so that the idea or problem is routed to the person best suited to solve the problem, or someone is assigned the responsibility to make a decision. And, in the case of all public and many private organizations, the system is transparent, because you’ve put your name on your original document and you’ve kept a copy. You can demand to know every step of the process, because it is a pre-approved process and everyone is supposed to be accountable.

As every employee, and especially every union steward knows, getting that much out of the leadership feels practically like a victory in itself. Knowing that an issue is “out in the open” — creating accountability for one individual manager — is a big step. Once a decision is made, or requests for comments and ideas are made, you can now direct comments to one individual, their next higher manager, or senior leadership if the problem seems critical. In any case, you’ve gotten a lot of bang for your buck—all from a few minutes jotting a few ideas down on a suggestion form.

No organization is perfect and a suggestion box might not work as well as you wish every time. It’s an old idea, but even in this modern age the suggestion box is still a relatively easy way to make changes for the better, which is one of our underlying responsibilities as good employees.

Safety Committee
Members of the IBEW Local 1245 Safety Committee are Al White, Pacific Gas & Electric; David Vipond, Pacific Gas & Electric; Michael Gomes, Pacific Gas & Electric; Sergio Munoz, Municipal Utility District; Art Torres, Sacramento Municipal Utility District; Sergio Munoz, Asplundh Tree; and Howard Stiefer, Assistant Business Manager.

Local 1245 employee dies in fall
Local 1245 was saddened by the death of an employee in the IBEW bargaining unit at South San Joaquin Irrigation District late last year. John Goeringer, an electrician at the District’s Water Treatment Division, died from head injuries after an apparent fall while working indoors at a water treatment plan pumping facility. The fatality is under investigation by the District, Cal-OSHA, and the police department.

Local 1245 offers its condolences to friends, family and co-workers of John Goeringer.
RMC, continued from page 1.

In addition to Sacramento, PG&E opened RMCs in Concord, Fresno and Morgan Hill during 2006, with Freeman again participating in the selection of the buildings. In December, the company converted local offices in Bakersfield, Chico and Santa Rosa into “transitional” RMCs.

It’s all part of an ambitious plan to transform the way the utility does business. By centralizing many clerical functions at the RMCs, PG&E hopes to improve consistency and achieve better coverage of the work by clustering employees together by function, which should translate into better service for customers.

Local 1245 members know better than anyone that change is long overdue. They’ve witnessed the inconsistencies in the way PG&E processes deposits or gives estimates on new business orders. They’ve seen contracts stall out because union members are on the ground putting one foot in vacation, causing work orders to go into hibernation.

They know that change is needed.

Rough Transition

Unfortunately, the transition to RMCs has been marred by equipment that isn’t in place yet, training that hasn’t happened, and inadequate planning for handing off the work. Which means that much of the work continues to fall to the local headquarters.

“Management can say, ‘We made this change, the RMCs are streamlined,’ but the local headquarters are really hurting. They have a lot of untrained people in local headquarters doing work they were never trained on,” says Adrianne Franks, an Operating Clerk now working at the Concord RMC. “It causes frustration trying to untangle something that someone did incorrectly”—not to mention trying to mollify customers who are inconvenienced along the way.

The Concord RMC was hurried into service last June, in part to prove that the company could meet aggressive deadlines. However, the “click-scheduling” technologies and SAP software that will power the RMCs won’t be ready until this coming July. The RMCs, in effect, are all dressed up with nowhere to go.

If the RMCs ultimately walk, it’s because union members are on the ground putting one foot in front of the other, helping PG&E navigate the new terrain.

While reduced workforces at local headquarters are swamped. “Customers are sometimes being lost in the shuffle during handoff,” says Litts. In Sacramento headquarters, which has three hiring hall employees performing Operating Clerical duties, “They’re treading water just trying to manage the phone calls they get. They’re just sinking.”

Recent storm-related outages in northern California served as a harsh reminder that local headquarters are still an important part of utility operations. “There was very little back office support left on the North Coast,” says Marlayne Morgan, an assistant to Local 1245 Business Manager Tom Dalzell. “The storm created huge problems.”

Cindy Berg, an Operating Clerk who came to the Sacramento RMC from San Jose, says the RMCs should “work great” for some departments. But in other departments, she notes, “we don’t know how it will work out to be so far away from local headquarters.”

Learning to Walk

But union members haven’t given up on the RMCs. In part this is because a commitment to service is deeply ingrained in union members’ work lives, far more real than any of the corporate slogans that have come and gone over the years. They want the RMCs to succeed. And PG&E is giving union members a chance to make it happen.

In November of 2005, the company asked the union’s help in sorting through a grab bag of ideas by PG&E’s consultant—Accenture—during the “vision and design” phase of Transformation. Some of those proposals have subsequently stalled out. But the RMCs appear to have legs.

Now, as the company enters the “test and train” phase of Transformation, management will be anxious to see if the RMCs can actually walk. As PG&E gears up for the release of the new technologies and software in July, the company is relying heavily on IBEW members to help devise the new work processes and create effective training materials. This effort will include IBEW members working more or less fulltime on “engagement teams,” as well as IBEW members (dubbed “super users”) providing technical expertise in the field. (See related story, Page 1.)

If the RMCs ultimately walk, it’s because union members are on the ground putting one foot in front of the other, helping PG&E navigate the new terrain. Litts, the Operating Clerk in Sacramento, expects success.

“If you have 60 offices you have the process being done 60 different ways, right or wrong,” At the RMCs, Litts says, there will be a consistent process, one that is “built with employee input” that strives to deliver what the customers want.

“I think it’s going to be difficult, it’s going to be uncomfortable,” says Litts. “But ultimately it’s going to benefit our customers, which is why we’re here today—why we’re in the business of Transformation.”

More RMC photos on Page 16.
The Concord RMC has attracted union members from all over. Operating Clerk Typist Kuen Saporita, standing left, came from San Francisco in September. Operating Clerk Maggie Marquez, standing right, came from Antioch in June. Senior Operating Clerk I-II Sylvia Leon, seated right, came from Livermore in August. Senior Operating Clerk I-II Phyllis Robertson, seated left, came from San Rafael in September.

Union members on the 6th floor of PG&E’s Resource Management Center in Concord handle Customer Fund Management. Much of the new technology has yet to be rolled out, but the new offices are light and spacious.

(Left) Senior Operating Clerk I-II Kathy Donohue, left, speaks with Operating Clerk Robert Martin at the Morgan Hill RMC.

(Below) Val Cal is a Dispatcher at the Fresno RMC.

May Checuti is an Operating Clerk at the Concord RMC.

“We don't know how it will work out to be so far away from the local headquarters,” says Cindy Berg, Operating Clerk at the Sacramento RMC.

Operating Clerk-Typist Stacy Freeman, left, shown here with Business Rep Arlene Edwards, was a member of the committee that selected the new RMC locations in Sacramento, Fresno, Concord and Morgan Hill (San Jose).