

## Inside:



**Map Flap** 8

**Dalzell: On Perseverance** 2

**Kathy Maas Remembered** 3

**Letters from Members** 3

**Bargaining Roundup** 4

**Petaluma Pin Dinner** 5

**Outside Construction Stewards** 10

**Six Sigma at PG&E** 12

**Oroville Pin Dinner** 12

**Safety: Help for Your Back** 13

**Tree Trimmers: Skyline Organized** 15

### News briefs

**Energy efficiency** and energy savings programs are the focus of a new collaborative effort by PG&E and the City of San Francisco. The \$11.5 million San Francisco Energy Watch program will be offered to residential and commercial customers from 2006 through 2008, helping the city achieve millions of dollars in energy savings and combat climate change.

**The Employee Free Choice Act** (HR 800) would give people the opportunity under the law to make their own decisions regarding unions, free of employer threats and intimidation. A vote was scheduled for March 1 in the House of Representatives, where the bill has 233 co-sponsors.

**Electric deregulation**, a failed 10 year experiment, has left Montana regulators and legislators with a sour taste. There is a growing push to let North Western Energy, a regulated utility, build power plants in the state, although there is still disagreement over how to incorporate the costs into the rate base.

**Education, veterans health care**, environmental protection and medical research are targeted for large cuts in President Bush's new budget. Bush calls for big hikes in military spending, and is expected to call for even greater increases through "supplemental appropriations" to fund military action in Iraq and Afghanistan.

# Utility Reporter

© GCU 889-M

Volume 56 No.2 • Month 2007

UTILITY IS STRENGTH

For up-to-the-minute news, see our website: [www.ibew1245.com](http://www.ibew1245.com)

## PG&E reverses course: 'front counters' stay open

■ Only 9 of 84 locations will close

**B**usiness Manager Tom Dalzell signed a Letter Agreement with Pacific Gas and Electric on Feb. 14 that brings to a close a long-running dispute over the company's plan to close 84 front counters at its local offices.

Although Local 1245 was unsuccessful in its attempt to stop the front counter closures through the grievance process, there was continuing resistance to the plan from consumer groups and the CPUC's Division of Ratepayer Advocates.

PG&E subsequently scaled back its

plan, and will now close just nine front counters at local offices. The number of employees directly affected by the closures, once estimated at over 300, is now just eight.

"We are glad that PG&E's front counter operations will continue providing valuable services to customers, and we are extremely pleased that the threat of employee displacements has been largely eliminated," said Dalzell.

The nine local office front counters to be eliminated are: Alameda, Newman, Orland, Willits, Corcoran, Willow Creek,

**View Letter Agreement 07-11 at [www.ibew1245.com](http://www.ibew1245.com)**

*Continued on page 12*



**Open for business** IBEW Local 1245 Service Representatives Patti Lewis (front right) and Gwen West assist customers at PG&E's front counter operation on Webster Street in Oakland. The letter agreement negotiated by the union last month assures that a vast majority of PG&E's front counter operations will be kept open, securing over 300 jobs currently held by IBEW members.

Photo by Eric Wolfe



Retiree Club members, including the five chapter presidents, gather for a photo after learning that their efforts had convinced PG&E to add another \$25 million to the Retirement Premium Offset Accounts.

## Relief for retirees

**PG&E agrees to additional \$25 million to defray retiree medical premium costs**

**P**acific Gas & Electric has agreed to earmark an additional \$25 million to offset retiree medical costs.

The financial package was announced during a Feb. 13 meeting with the leaders of the five chapters of the IBEW Local 1245 Retirees Club, and incorporated into a letter agreement signed the same day by Business Manager Tom Dalzell.

"The company offer was a major milestone in the union's on-going effort to gain relief for retirees from the crushing

burden of medical premium costs," said Dalzell.

**Campaign by Local 1245 Retirees Club gets results**

Medical premiums have absorbed an ever-growing portion of retiree pension checks in recent years, and sparked a growing sense of desperation among PG&E's thousands of retirees. The Local 1245 Retirees Club publicized the problem throughout 2006 with a campaign

that included letters to PG&E's top officers, local newspapers, elected officials and state regulators.

But in the end, it was personal testimony by club leaders that moved the company to action, according to PG&E Senior Vice President Russ Jackson. During meetings in June and October, club leaders laid out in moving detail the hardships that retirees are experiencing as medical costs continue to rise.

*Continued on page 6*

## Agreement eases impact of clerical consolidation

**Voluntary process reduces threat of displacements**

**A** Letter Agreement has reduced the threat of displacements in IBEW's Clerical bargaining unit

at Pacific Gas & Electric.

Letter Agreement 07-10, signed by Business Manager Tom Dalzell on Feb. 13, emphasizes voluntary measures to deal with the loss of Clerical positions that resulted from PG&E's consolidation of Clerical work at newly-recreated Resource Management Centers.

"Possible displacements has been a cloud hanging over our Clerical members ever since PG&E decided to consolidate this work," said Dalzell. "We

*Continued on page 12*

**Outside Line Construction**  
**Sacramento Regional Transit**  
**Modesto Irrigation District**  
**Turlock Irrigation District**  
**USBR & WAPA**

**Steward Training**  
**See Pages 10-11**

## Arcing and Sparking



**Tom Dalzell**  
BUSINESS MANAGER

## A Triumph of Perseverance

The week of Valentine's Day was an extraordinary one at Local 1245. We reached agreement with PG&E on three longstanding issues, and each agreement represented a triumph of perseverance by our members and union.

At the same time, it was the week we received the news that Howard Stiefer would be taking time off work to address health concerns.

Howard has been front and center in Local 1245 for as long as any of us can remember, 21 years as President and the last six as an Assistant Business Manager. In countless situations where anger might be expected, Howard has calmed waters, reserving anger for those special occasions when only forcefulness will do. In recent months, he has been at the forefront of a number of important initiatives with PG&E: rubber gloving, Transmission Department Linemen, weekend service units, long-line work, and possible improvements to GC per diem, to name a few. We don't know how long Howard will be gone, but we will miss him and his leaving on Feb. 16 left a hole in our organization and hearts. We will be glad when he returns.

## Retiree Package

The first of the agreements reached with PG&E was on Feb. 13, when PG&E agreed to increase retirees' Retirement Premium Offset Accounts by \$25 million effective July 1, 2007. The retirees who organized to push PG&E to make

improvements is a case study in the success of community organizing. A relatively few retired Local 1245 members started meeting some years ago, voicing their individual concerns about the dwindling buying power of PG&E pensions in light of ever-increasing medical premium increases. Individual concerns soon became a group concern, and anger and fear were channeled into a plan for action and change.

By last summer, there were regular meetings of five chapters of the Retiree's Club, with ongoing support from Local 1245 staff. Ultimately several hundred retirees became actively involved, and Jack Hill, a retiree who served as a retirees representative on the 2002 and 2005 PG&E bargaining committees, was the driving force behind the movement.

In 2006, the retirees and Local 1245 leaders met with PG&E officers twice to discuss retiree problems and possible improvements. After some delay and managed frustration, I met with leaders from the five chapters and PG&E Senior Vice President Russ Jackson on Feb. 13 at union headquarters in Vacaville, where we announced agreement on the \$25 million package. Given the price tag, we were not surprised to learn that the decision to grant this benefit in the middle of a contract term was made at the uppermost levels of PG&E management.

Twenty-five proud and happy retirees signed my copy of the \$25 million letter agreement that afternoon, determined to carry their success forward to build momentum for the 2008 general negotiations. (See page 6.)

## Operating Clerical

At the same time, we reached agreement with PG&E on a second important issue—the reduction in forces of operating clerical employees in the local offices. In short, our agreement provides for voluntary severance in place of involuntary displacement, with the opportunity for voluntary severance extended to some physical bargaining unit clerks.

This agreement, which was welcome news in dozens of tense local offices, was

the result of a convergence of factors. Since consolidation of much operating clerical work into Resource Management Centers began last summer, Local 1245 has privately but urgently expressed to PG&E management its fear that cuts in the local offices were too deep and that the projected reduction by hundreds more would be a mistake. Many of our members made personal pleas on this point, writing to management with passion backed up by detailed facts; the letters that Liz Rounds wrote are a powerful example of persuasive writing from the rank and file. ESC leadership and members made similar arguments to management from their point of view.

At the same time, PG&E COO Bill Morrow launched a review of new business transactions using a business methodology known as Six Sigma. Three IBEW bargaining unit members were part of the Six Sigma team from the start, as were ESC members. (See page 12.) Their hard work over the month of January led to startling new data and innovative ideas, and called into question the company's original plan for limiting local office involvement in new business work.

All of these factors converged and led to Letter Agreement 07-10, which favors voluntary severance and preserves the right-sizing calculations as new information is developed in Six Sigma and

elsewhere. It is a temporary fix, but these days a year is a long time and getting this fix for 2007 is important progress.

## Front Counters

Lastly, on February 15th we joined with PG&E and other parties in the CPUC rate case to announce a tentative agreement to close nine small front counter operations in local offices, leaving 75 offices open for business. As a result, eight or fewer employees will voluntarily sever or be placed in a nearby local office.

At stake in the company's proposed closure of front counter operations were 375 bargaining unit jobs, not to mention PG&E's presence in 84 communities. Local 1245 expressed its opinion about the wisdom of this proposal early, often, and to whoever in upper management we were talking with. Our members in the front counter operations took pen to paper and fingers to keyboard and

continued on page 3

## CALENDAR

**Month of March:** Nominations for Local Union office during Unit Meetings

**Mar. 10:** Stewards Conference, Sacramento, CA

**Mar. 10:** Service Awards, Sacramento, CA

**Mar. 10:** Service Awards (Outside Construction), Sacramento, CA

**Mar. 14:** Retirees Club, Vacaville, CA

**Mar. 16:** Service Awards, Ukiah, CA

**Mar. 17:** Stewards Conference, Reno, NV

**Mar. 17:** Service Awards, Reno, NV

**Mar. 23:** Service Awards, Merced, CA

**Mar. 23:** Stewards Conference, Fresno, CA

**Mar. 24:** Service Awards, Fresno, CA

**Mar. 30:** Service Awards, Eureka, CA

**Mar. 31:** Stewards Conference, Eureka, CA

**Apr. 3:** Retirees Club, Merced, CA

**Apr. 3:** Retirees Club, Santa Rosa, CA

**Apr. 5:** Retirees Club, San Jose, CA

**Apr. 11:** Retirees Club, Vacaville, CA

**Apr. 12:** Retirees Club, Dublin, CA

**Apr. 14:** Service Awards, Stockton, CA

**Apr. 21:** Service Awards, Salinas/Monterey, CA

**Apr. 28:** Stewards Conference, San Luis Obispo, CA

**Apr. 28:** Service Awards, San Luis Obispo, CA

**May 19:** Stewards Conference, Pacifica, CA

**May 19:** Service Awards, Pacifica, CA

## APPOINTMENTS

### FRONTIER COMMUNICATIONS

**Bargaining Committee**  
Luiz Nunes  
Carmen Morley

### CALIFORNIA GAS TRANSMISSION

**Labor-Management Committee**  
Clay Follett

### TRANSCANADA

**Labor-Management Committee**  
Linda Mitchell

### CONFERENCES AND CONVENTIONS

**C.L. Dellums African American Union Leadership School**  
Lisa Long

### Electrical Workers Minority Caucus

Donna Ambeau  
Adrienne Franks  
Dan Gracia  
John W. Johnson  
Dorothy Fortier

### IBEW Ninth District Progress Meeting

Anna Bayless-Martinez  
Tom Cornell  
Mike Cottrell  
Tom Dalzell  
Mike Davis  
Cecelia De La Torre  
Art Freitas  
Chris Habecker  
Dave Scott



## UtilityReporter

March 2007  
Volume 56 No. 2  
Circulation: 22,200



**Business Manager & Executive Editor**  
Tom Dalzell

**Communications Director & Managing Editor**  
Eric Wolfe

**President**  
Mike Davis

### Executive Board

Art Freitas  
Chris Habecker  
Dave Scott  
Anna Bayless-Martinez  
Tom Cornell  
Mike Cottrell

**Treasurer**  
Cecelia De La Torre

Published monthly, except for combined issues in January/February and July/August, at 30 Orange Tree Circle, Vacaville, CA 95687. Official publication of Local Union 1245, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, AFL-CIO, P.O. Box 2547, Vacaville, CA 95696.

Periodical postage paid at Vacaville and at additional mailing offices. USPS No. 654640, ISSN No. 0190-4965.

**POSTMASTER:** Please send Form 3579, Change of Address, and all

correspondence to Utility Reporter, P.O. Box 2547, Vacaville, CA 95696.

Single copies \$1. Subscription by arrangement. Have you moved recently? Please send complete new address and your Social Security Number (by U.S. Mail) to: "Address Change" IBEW Local 1245 P.O. Box 2547 Vacaville, CA 95696.

Our Web Site can be viewed at [www.IBEW1245.com](http://www.IBEW1245.com).

Our phone number is (707) 452-2700.



Got something to share with your fellow union members? Send letters to: Utility Reporter Letters, IBEW 1245, POB 2547, Vacaville, CA 95696. Please note that we cannot print personal attacks or letters dealing with union politics. Opinions expressed in "Letters" are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IBEW Local 1245.

## "Unprecedented"

The signing of the Letter of Agreement enhancing the Retirement Premium Offset Accounts (RPOA) of current retirees brings to an end one segment of a longer journey. I'm proud to have been part of the journey but I'm especially proud to have had the oppor-

tunity to work with such dedicated, principled retirees. Many months have passed and at times I wondered whether we would lose focus but just the opposite occurred. We continued to grow in numbers and chapters and our focus sharpened.

My thanks to Tom Dalzell and his staff for their efforts on behalf of retirees. I must also thank Russ Jackson and his team for taking our case to senior management, in effect, being our advocate. Now it's time for retirees to take the next step. We need to take our case to the younger employees. We need to educate them about the rising cost of health care premiums and how they will be effected. If there is to be any significant change to the current system we will need their help. We must attend unit meetings on a regular basis in an all-out effort to educate and enlist the younger workers.

This type of effort inherently takes time to evolve. As retirees, we weighed our options and listened to those with experience in these matters, allowing

the company time to do the homework required to come to a decision. This Letter of Agreement isn't perfect for everyone but it does provide relief for all, especially the older retiree. This is an unprecedented agreement. It's the result of our steadfast, professional, non-threatening course of action in presenting our case. As retirees, we have to make the same case to regular employees over the next 18-20 months. This effort is a reminder as to what unions are about, working for the greater good and looking to the future.

Proudly and fraternally yours,  
George Murphey, Vacaville Chapter,  
Local 1245 Retirees Club

tion with the company. The sacrifice that each and every one of you made for the membership demonstrates the great character that you are made of. No matter the result of the upcoming vote, you as a committee have my utmost respect and admiration. Thank you!

In unity, Jim Pursel, Minden, NV

## Thank you PG&E

*Editor's note: The following letter was sent by a Washington resident hit by the December power outage. Her letter, originally received at PG&E's Eureka office, is reprinted here.*

Dear Guys of PG&E line crews who came to Olympia and restored our power last week:

Thank You!

You're now known in our area as "Those marvelous guys from PG&E!" We know it was a dangerous job and we appreciate all your efforts!

No shower has ever felt hotter than my Christmas shower! Our little motorhome got a problem between the  
**continued on page 15**

## Superb effort

*Editor's note: The following e-mail was sent to the union negotiating committee at Sierra Pacific Power and is reprinted here with the author's permission.*

I would like to take this opportunity to personally express my appreciation for a superb effort in the long negotia-

## Triumph, from page 2

joined us in writing letters to management with the proven combination of deeply-felt conviction and factual backup. We challenged one aspect of the proposed closure in arbitration, and in a mixed decision were able to limit the company to the current and historical level of 435 pay stations.

The settlement on this issue came about through the hard work of Marc Joseph, the attorney for CUE (California Utility Employees), the coalition through which Local 1245 is represented before the CPUC. PG&E's presence in 75 communities is maintained, and 375 jobs are saved. Not bad in an

era when the telephone company, also regulated by the CPUC, has entirely disappeared from California communities.

Because the settlement would allow the company to increase the number of pay stations, it will be sent out to affected clerical employees for ratification, an exercise in union democracy that will make us even stronger than our success in reaching the settlement.

It takes a lot of work by a lot of members to produce results like the ones we achieved during Valentines Week. These accomplishments serve as a reminder that our best days are still ahead of us when we are united in purpose and action.

## Local union elections

As reported in the January/February issue of the Utility Reporter, nominations for local union officers, Executive Board, and Advisory Council members will be accepted at unit meetings in March. The May issue of the Utility Reporter will feature biographies of candidates. A mail-ballot election will be conducted in June.

## Merced Irrigation District Unit

Unit 1122, Merced Irrigation District, now meets at the Branding Iron, 640 W. 16th St., Merced. The unit schedule on the IBEW Local 1245 website has been updated to reflect this information.

Mike Grill, Business Rep.

## New dispatcher

Local 1245 has hired Kelly Dark as a dispatcher for the union's Outside Line Construction hiring hall.

Dark is no stranger to unions. She worked previously for United Public Employees of California in Redding. Her father, Steve Kerr, now retired, was a 32-year member of Local 1245, and her brother is a union electrician.

"We're a union family," says Dark. Welcome aboard, Kelly!



Kelly Dark

## Kathy Maas (1945-2007)

Former Business Rep. Kathy Maas, who died last month, will be honored with a place on the Local 1245 Memorial Wall at union headquarters in Vacaville, by a unanimous vote of the Executive Board.

"She was a unionist's unionist. She was fiercely devoted to the labor movement and to the members," said Business Manager Tom Dalzell, who was serving as staff attorney when Maas was hired in 1990. "She excelled in every facet of being a union representative—with the members, with politics, with health and safety, with the central labor councils. Most people are lucky if they are masters in just a few of these areas—she was brilliant in all of them."

Maas brought a wealth of experience to Local 1245 when she was hired in January 1990. Since 1985 she had worked as a mediator, and in 1987 began mediating labor disputes in the public sector in southern California.

In explaining why she accepted a job with Local 1245, Maas once said, "I am a labor person. I like representing working people."

She was, indeed, a labor person. But calling Maas a "labor person" is a bit like calling Franklin Roosevelt a politician or Willie Mays a baseball player—it really doesn't capture what she brought to the job. Maas wore her devotion to the cause of working people on her sleeve. Her facts and figures were always ready to hand, her arguments persuasive, her style engaging, and her sincerity never in doubt. It was a winning

combination.

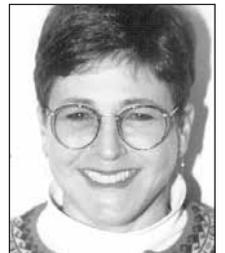
Before her work as a mediator, Maas worked as a teacher in the Richmond Unified School District, where she belonged to the Richmond Federation of Teachers Local 866. She also worked as an apprenticeship consultant, helping develop, promote and assist apprenticeship programs in the San Francisco Bay Area.

For a time she served as a senior apprenticeship consultant with the State of California Department of Labor.

At Local 1245, Maas's assignments included PG&E San Jose, Belmont and Peninsula Skyline (including General Construction employees in those areas), PG&E Pipeline in Milpitas, City of Santa Clara, AC Transit, Western Cable TV, City of Berkeley, Asplundh Tree and Davey Tree. She went out on LTD in 2000.

Maas was married to Stan Smith, the Secretary-Treasurer of the San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council, now retired, and spoke often to her colleagues about her six step-children.

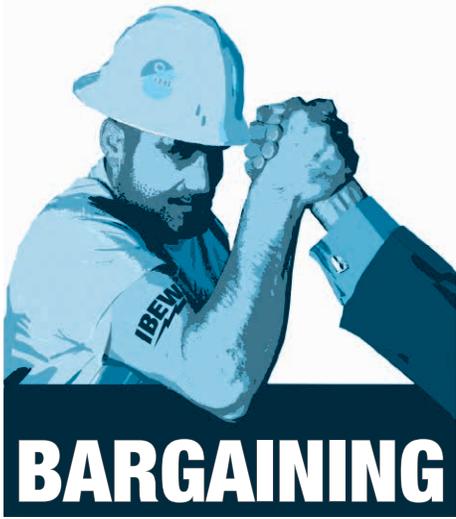
A memorial service will be held March 18. Call the union hall for details. Donations in Kathy's memory can be made to: Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, 49 Stevenson St., Suite 1200, San Francisco, CA 94105.



Kathy Maas

Get the latest news at

[www.ibew1245.com](http://www.ibew1245.com)



## New pact at City of Roseville

Local 1245 members at the City of Roseville on Jan. 23 ratified a four-year agreement that improves wages significantly.

The package, ratified by nearly three-quarters of those voting, provides a general wage increase of 5% in the first year, 5% in the second year, 5% in the third year, and a split wage increase in the fourth year of 3% in January and 3% in July.

Negotiations consisted of 11 "meet and confer" sessions, with Business Rep. Jack Osburn heading the union bargaining committee. Business Manager Tom Dalzell participated in the last session where the final agreement was hammered out. Also attending was Business Rep. Patrick Waite who, according to Osburn, "applied his talents creating a spreadsheet and verifying the cost of this over-five-million-dollar settlement."

In addition to the general wage increases, the agreement provides the following equity increases:



Jack Osburn

## Five-year pact at Port of Oakland

Local 1245 members last month ratified a new five-year agreement with the Port of Oakland.

The pact provides a wage increase of 3% in 2007, retroactive to Nov. 1, 2006. Wages will be increased 4% effective Jan. 1, 2008, 3% in 2009 and 4% in 2010. In 2011, wage hikes will be pegged to the Consumer Price Index, with a floor of 3% and a cap of 5%.

Other provisions negotiated by the union include:



Lynne Morel

In the first year, 5% applied to Electric System Dispatcher, Senior Electric System Dispatcher, Power Plant Mechanic, Power Plant Operator, and Power Plant Lead Operator.

In the first year, 2.5% applied to Line Technician, Line Crew Supervisor, Line Troubleshooter, Electric Utility Technician (previously Metering and Substation Electrical Technicians), Metering Crew Supervisor, and Substation Crew Supervisor.

In the second year, 3% applied to Electric System Dispatcher, Senior Electric System Dispatcher, Power Plant Mechanic, Power Plant Operator, and Power Plant Lead Operator.

Medical benefits were improved in the first year, with the total monthly cap going from \$711.80 to \$1090. Sub-caps are \$983.10 for health, \$95.76 for dental, and \$11.14 for vision. In the second, third and fourth years the employer will pick up an additional 80% of the average available HMO's monthly premium increases, Osburn said.

Other compensation pay increases in the first year are:

- 3% for NERC certification for Electric System Dispatcher and Senior Electric System Dispatcher.
- 2.5% for up to five designated Electric Department staff to obtain and maintain crane certification.
- 2.5% in Environmental Utilities Department for up to six designated staff in Water Distribution and Waste Water Collection to obtain and maintain a Class A driver's license.

Increased certification pay from 2% maximum to a 4% maximum for Senior and Worker II employees in Environmental Utilities, Water Distribution and Wastewater Collection for an increased combination of certifications.

### New PERS Option

The agreement also adopted an "optional beneficiary death benefit" under the PERS retirement plan. Under the old agreement, a surviving spouse

- Improvements in the meal allowance and shoe allowance.
- A 3% premium for anyone required to have a Class A driver's license.
- Significant improvements in "performance evaluation procedures."

Negotiating for the union were Dave Cuthbertson, Bill Morrison, Robert Shiner, Patricia Seals, and Business Rep. Lynne Morel.

## Truckee-Donner offer rejected

Local 1245 members soundly rejected a contract package offered by Truckee-Donner Public Utility District.

The vote, counted Feb. 1, was 8 for and 38 against.

was entitled to receive only the contributions that the employee made to PERS. The new optional death benefit is a monthly allowance equal to the amount the member would have received if he/she had retired from service on the date of death and elected "optional settlement 2", the highest monthly allowance a member can leave a spouse or domestic partner.

The City decided to extend the new PERS option negotiated by Local 1245 to miscellaneous city employees outside the bargaining unit, demonstrating how the bargaining power of unions helps lift all boats.

Other provisions of the agreement clarified meal language, codified a sick leave/wellness sell-back program, clarified application of uniform provisions, and improved the style of safety glasses. The life insurance buy-up option is to be available and conditioned if a total of 25% of all city employees participate, Osburn said.

The agreement also added an appendix with 12-hour shift language, added an exclusive recognition provision, and extended the voluntary health buy-out program from Dec. 31, 2006 until the expiration date of Nov. 24, 2007 for current participants.

The term of the agreement is Jan. 1,

2007 through Dec. 31, 2010

Serving on the general bargaining committee, in addition to Osburn, were Joel Cabezuela, Rick Thompson, Dennis Torres, Travis Watkins, and Doug Willford. Other subcommittee members not at the bargaining table assisted the general bargaining committee by supplying comparison research data and technical support.

The ballot committee was composed of Judge Doug Willford, Teller Cheril Flower, Teller Dennis Torres, and Teller Travis Watkins.

## Wage hikes at City of Willits

Wages will go up 4%, paid retroactively to July 1, 2006, under a wage-opener agreement negotiated by Local 1245 at the City of Willits.

Bargaining for the wage opener began in May of 2006.

Negotiating for the union were J.C. England, Joe Mondo and Business Rep. Rich Cowart.



Rich Cowart

## Pact with Wood Group extended

Members of IBEW Local 1245 employed at the Morro Bay and Moss Landing power plants ratified a contract extension with Wood Group Power Operations West.

The mail-ballot vote, tallied on Feb. 1, approves an extension of the current labor agreement until Aug. 1, with a 3.5% wage increase applied Jan. 1 for the calendar year 2007.

Full negotiations are expected to commence the first week of April.

Wood Group Power Operations West recently acquired the plants from LS Power, which acquired them from Mirant in May 2006, which acquired them from Pacific Gas & Electric during California's ill-fated experiment in electric deregulation.



Dan Lockwood

## Members ratify Sierra pact

Local 1245 members ratified Sierra Pacific Power's last contract offer by a sizeable margin in a mail ballot counted on Feb. 28.

The Local 1245 bargaining committee had remained neutral on the package, opting to let the members decide whether the gains outweighed the losses. Members have been working without wage increases since the expiration of the old agreement at the end of 2005.

The new agreement provides an immediate 8% wage increase, as well as 4% increases in January 2008 and January 2009, except for those employees subject to a wage freeze as described below.

The agreement also provides that most journey electric classifications will

receive a 2.5% equity increase immediately and .75% equity increases in January 2008 and January 2009.

A wage freeze and lump sum wage bonuses will apply to several Clerical, Meter Reading, and Buildings and Grounds employees.

The agreement establishes Hiring Hall provisions for Customer Service Representatives, with a ceiling on the percentage of CSR positions that can be filled through the Hiring Hall.

There will be a mandatory buy-down of post-retirement medical benefits for employees hired after Jan. 1, 1998 who have less than 75 points (age + years of service). This provision is voluntary for employees with greater than 75 points. There will be an increase in post-retirement medical for employees hired after Jan. 1, 1998.

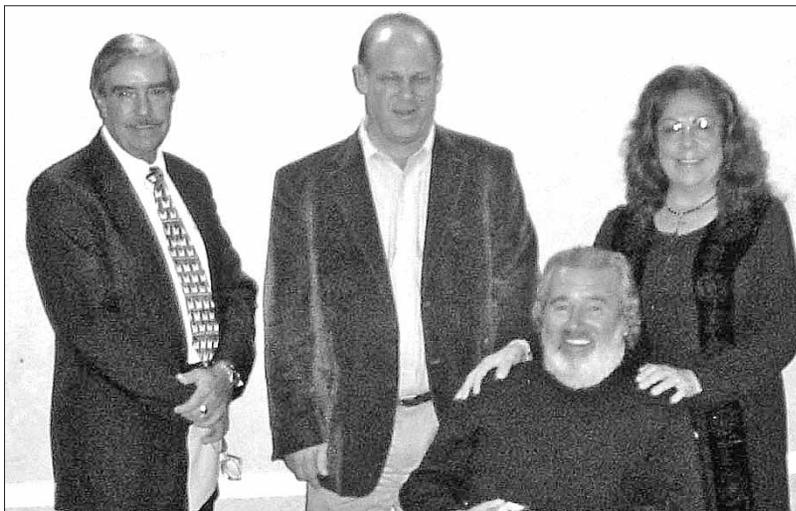
The agreement also changes the PPO Medical Plan from a 10% to 20%

continued on page 5

# SERVICE AWARDS



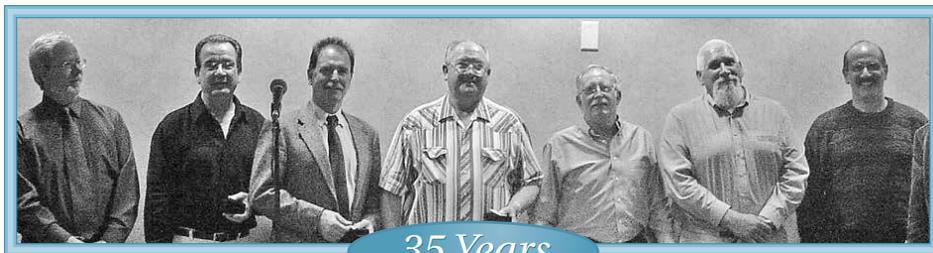
Petaluma, CA  
November 17, 2006



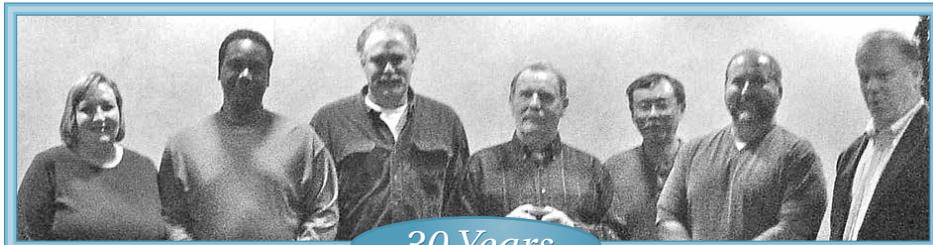
45 years: Kenneth Williams, shown here with his wife Julie, receives his 45-year award from Business Manager Tom Dalzell and Senior Business Rep. Larry Pierce.



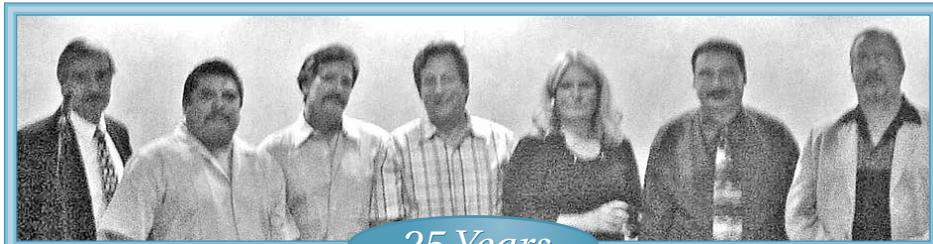
40 years: Accepting 40-year awards from Larry Pierce, left, and Tom Dalzell, right, are (from left): Santa Rosa Chapter Retiree Club President Larry Mead, Brian Kerchenko, Dennis Roussan, Carol Noonan and Dennis Glynn.



35 Years



30 Years



25 Years

## Howard Stiefer medical leave

**H**oward Stiefer will be off work for several weeks for medical treatment.

An Assistant Business Manager for IBEW Local 1245 since 2001, Stiefer is known to many as the local union's longest-serving president. He was appointed to the post in 1980, and the membership kept him in that position through seven elections. When then-Business Manager Perry Zimmerman brought Stiefer on board as a senior member of his administrative staff in 2001, Stiefer had served as president of Local 1245 for 21 years—three times longer than any other person ever to hold that office.



Howard Stiefer reporting at last July's Advisory Council meeting in Reno.

Friends are welcome to offer their greetings and support to Howard. Cards and letters should be sent to: Howard Stiefer, IBEW Local 1245, P.O. Box 2547, Vacaville, CA 95696. Or you can contact Howard directly by e-mail at [hjs8@ibew1245.com](mailto:hjs8@ibew1245.com).

## Sierra pact, from page 4

employee co-pay on doctor visits.

Employees will now pay 16% of health insurance premiums, increasing 1% per year to 18% in the last year of the agreement.

Serving on the union bargaining committee, along with Business Rep. Randy Osborn and Assistant Business Manager Dennis Seyfer, were Reto Gross, Dan Lyday, Gary Bailey, Dale Huntsman, Tom Cornell, Vickie Borst, Jerry McAlister, Aaron Dorman and Mike Grimm.

## THE HONOREES

### 45 Years

Kenneth Williams

### 40 Years

J. L. Baulwin  
Denis Glynn  
Brian Kerchenko  
Larry Mead  
Carol Noonan  
R. W. Rentschler  
D. R. Roussan

### 35 Years

Lawrence Barni  
Dennis Delgrande  
Charles, J. Fisher  
Connie Gibson-Royal  
John Gomes  
Jim Gordan

Charles Hadrich  
Lee Hensley  
Patrick Holland  
Doug Hopper  
Thomas Jacobson  
Steven Manfre  
John Plover  
Marvin Reno, II  
Richard Roberto  
Rick Smithers  
Gary Stevenson  
Lee Taha

### 30 Years

Paul Catalano  
Garrick Fong  
Jill Hickey  
Floyd Latimer  
Andrew Mueller  
Gordon Pigg

James Pigg  
Gustavo Rendon  
Christine Reyes  
Edward Rillera  
Pamela Thornton  
Jon Winterboer  
Randy Yancey

### 25 Years

Dennis Baraty  
Moise Cortez  
Betty De Conter  
Debra Fechter  
Steven Genis  
Jacquelin Good  
Douglas Koski  
Don Peyrucain  
Robert Rael  
Mark Rasmussen  
Patricia Valim

## Make Your Taxes Less Taxing

**Feeling taxed?** As a union member, you don't have to worry about the high cost of preparing taxes online. **The Union Plus Online Tax Service** costs less than half of similar services from H&R Block® and Quicken® —and it's just as easy to use. Simply answer some questions, fill in **your** numbers, and the program does the rest.

**Log on to make tax preparation a snap**

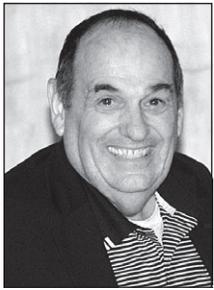
[www.unionplus.org/taxes](http://www.unionplus.org/taxes)

Available 24/7

Union Privilege selected Dennis G. Jenkins, CPA to provide this service. The firm uses a program developed by CCH Incorporated, the leading provider of computer software for tax professionals.

Union  
Plus

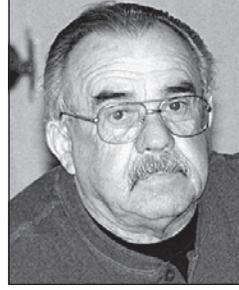




Former Business Manager Perry Zimmerman, who prioritized retiree pension and medical benefits during his five-year administration, helped coordinate the Retiree Club's effort that resulted in the \$25 million package.



Mike Silva, President of the East Bay Chapter.



Bob Renoude, President of the Vacaville/Sacramento Chapter.



Larry Mead, President of the Santa Rosa Chapter.

## Retirees, continued from page 1.

"We heard you," said Jackson at the Feb. 13 meeting, thanking the club leaders for their "patience and professionalism."

### Zimmerman's Key Role

Dalzell lauded former Business Manager Perry Zimmerman for his role in facilitating the agreement with the company. Zimmerman prioritized the retiree issue during his five years as Business Manager and has continued as an outspoken advocate for retirees following his own retirement last August.

At the October meeting, retirees picked Zimmerman to help coordinate the activities of the five chapters, along with Jack Hill, acting president of the

San Jose Chapter of the Retirees Club, and Gordon Borges, who organized an extremely active club chapter in Merced last year.

The financial assistance, structured to help both bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit retirees, will come in the form of a new Retirement Premium Offset Account, modeled on a similar account bargained in 2002. Jackson estimated that about 70% of the benefit would go to bargaining unit retirees.

The new RPOA will provide \$1650 for every IBEW retiree who retired after 1993 with 25 or more years of service. The RPOA for post-1993 retirees with 10 to 25 years of service will provide \$9.16 per month of service between 10 years and 25 years of service.

For individuals who retired prior to 1994 with 25 or more years of service, the RPOA will be \$3300. For those with 10 to 25 years of service, the RPOA will be \$18.33 per month of service between 10 years and 25 years of service. The new RPOA, which can only be used after an individual has completely depleted the original RPOA, will be used to reduce 25% of the individual's required monthly medical premium contribution.

Business Manager Tom Dalzell credited the Retiree Club leaders for their persistence in pressing for financial relief throughout 2006.

"This is 25 million bucks," Dalzell told the retirees following the meeting with PG&E. "That's the equivalent of 4% of the company's payroll moving across

the table because of you."

### Not a Permanent Solution

Both the company and the union acknowledged that the new RPOA was not a permanent solution to the deepening crisis in health care costs. The IBEW has long advocated for some sort of national action on health care. PG&E has also become interested in "state and national solutions" to the health insurance problem, according to Jackson.

Retiree leaders attending the Feb. 13 meeting clearly understood that the new financial assistance offered by PG&E was just a first step in a longer journey. They discussed the need to continue strengthening the Retirees Club by building attendance at their chapter meetings, and reported recent expressions of interest in starting new chapters in Lake County, Red Bluff, and Fresno.

"Our work is really just beginning," noted George Murphey, a member of the Vacaville Chapter.

In the near future, Retiree Club leaders plan to send a letter to all known



East Bay Chapter President Mike Silva, second from left, discusses strategy prior to the meeting with PG&E where the financial package was announced. Chairing the pre-meeting is San Jose Chapter Acting President Jack Hill, standing right.

# Retirees must keep up momentum

By Ken Rawles

The Feb. 13 agreement to increase the Retiree Premium Offset Account is a historical and monumental accomplishment for the local union and IBEW 1245 retirees.

Remember, 2008 negotiations are coming up next year! Keep up the momentum!

Thank you Local 1245 Business Manager Tom Dalzell, and PG&E Senior Vice President Russ Jackson. This is the start of a 2-year process of educating our younger workers as to the need to be persistent in talks with PG&E over the pension and medical benefits. We will need to attend the unit meetings throughout the system to explain the work to be done, and use "just one on one" discussions with the younger workers.

I want to also encourage retirees to help start new clubs in your area. We now have 5 clubs: San Jose, Dublin, Vacaville, Santa Rosa and Merced. There is talk of Reno, Fresno and upper valley clubs getting ready to form.

Let's make sure we continue our efforts, and increase our strength. Remember that we have strength in our numbers—only if we are unified through our Local 1245.

Ken Rawles is Unit Recorder for the Santa Rosa Chapter of the IBEW Local 1245 Retirees Club.

Retirees attending the historic Feb. 13 meeting with PG&E autographed the Letter Agreement that provides \$25 million in additional funding for the Retiree Premium Offset Account.

**LETTER AGREEMENT NO. 07-07-PGE**

PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY  
LABOR RELATIONS DEPARTMENT  
2850 SHADELANDS DRIVE, SUITE 100  
WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA 94598  
(925) 974-4104

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS, AFL-CIO  
LOCAL UNION 1245, I.B.E.W.  
P.O. BOX 2547  
VACAVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95696  
(707) 452-2700

STEPHEN RAYBURN  
DIRECTOR AND CHIEF NEGOTIATOR

TOM DALZELL  
BUSINESS MANAGER

February 13, 2007

Dear Mr. Dalzell:

Effective July 1, 2007, the Company proposes to enhance the Retiree Premium Offset Accounts (RPOA) for retirees eligible to receive retiree medical and who retired before 2007 as follows:

Date of Retirement	Years of Service	Amount
Pre-1994	25 or More	\$3,300
Pre-1994	10 to 25	\$18.33 per Month of Service Between 10 Years and 25 Years of Service
Post-1993	25 or More	\$1,650
Post-1993	10 to 25	\$9.16 per Month of Service Between 10 Years and 25 Years of Service

Retirees can use the above RPOA account balance to reduce 25% of the required medical premium contribution.

If you are in accord with the foregoing and agree thereto, please so indicate in the space provided and return one executed copy of this letter to the Company.

Very truly yours,  
Sabin A. ...  
PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY

By: Stephen A. Rayburn  
Director and Chief Negotiator

I, \_\_\_\_\_, in accord with the foregoing and agrees thereto as of the date hereof.

LOCAL UNION NO. 1245, INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS, AFL-CIO

By: Tom Dalzell  
Business Manager

13 FEB 2007

## Retiree Club Meeting Schedule

**East Bay Chapter:**  
2nd Thursday each month, 10 a.m., IBEW Local 595, 6250 Village Parkway, Dublin, CA

**San Jose Chapter:**  
1st Thursday each month, 10 a.m. at IBEW Local 332, 2125 Canoas Garden, San Jose, CA.

**Vacaville/Sacramento Chapter:** 2nd Wednesday each month, 10 a.m. at IBEW Local 1245, 30 Orange Tree Circle, Vacaville, CA.

**Santa Rosa Chapter:**  
1st Tuesday each month, 10 a.m. at IBEW Local 551, 2525 Cleveland Ave., Suite B, Santa Rosa.

**Merced Chapter:**  
1st Tuesday each month, 10 a.m., Merced Senior Community, 755 W. 15th Street, Merced.



Jack Hill, Acting President of the San Jose Chapter.



Mike Bonds, President of the Merced Chapter.

PG&E retirees who once belonged to the IBEW, encouraging them to join the club. Membership in the Retirees Club, just \$36 a year, entitles retirees 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
- A voice in the on-going campaign to improve pensions and health coverage for retirees.

For a membership application, contact Local 1245 Office Manager Tonya Alston at 707-452-2718.

Leaders of the five chapters attending the Feb. 13 meeting were: Mike Silva, East Bay Chapter; Jack Hill, Acting President, San Jose Chapter; Bob Renoude, Vacaville Chapter; Larry Mead, Santa Rosa Chapter; and Mike Bonds, Merced Chapter.

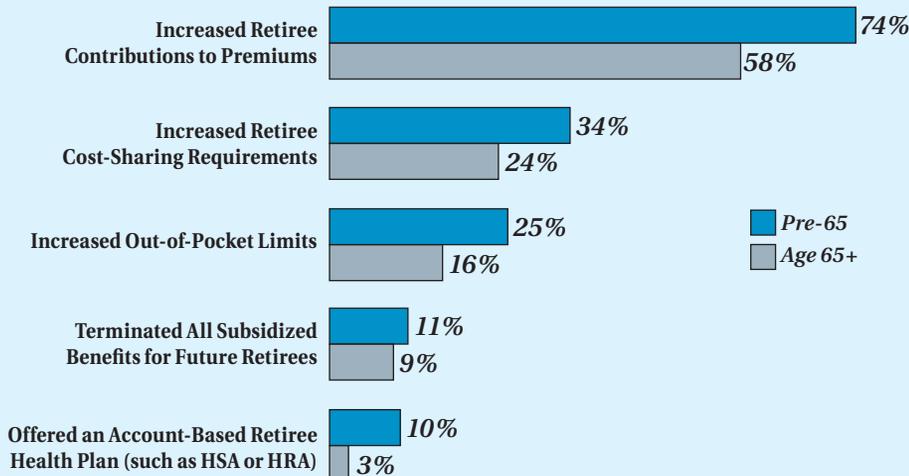
Other retiree leaders in attendance were: Larry Darby, Art Freitas, Robert Sherbourne, Ed Lenoir, George Murphey, Dave Santori, David Blabor, Ken Rawles, Bob Himelick, Donald Johannsen, Laurence Souza, Don Ericksen, Watie Anthony, Gary Abrahamson, Perry Zimmerman and Mel Hambrick.

## New RPOA Benefit

Effective July 1, 2007, the Company will enhance the Retiree Premium Offset Accounts (RPOA) of retirees who retired before 2007 and who are eligible to receive retiree medical as follows:

Date of Retirement	Years of Service	Amount
Pre-1994	25 or More	\$3,300
Pre-1994	10 to 25	\$18.33 per Month of Service Between 10 Years and 25 Years of Service
Post-1993	25 or More	\$1,650
Post-1993	10 to 25	\$9.16 per Month of Service Between 10 Years and 25 Years of Service

## Percentage of Large Private-Sector Employers That Made Changes to Retiree Health Benefits Between 2005 and 2006<sup>1</sup>



Source: Kaiser/Hewitt 2006 Survey on Retiree Health Benefits, December 2006  
<sup>1</sup> Based on responses from private-sector firms with 1,000 or more employees offering retiree health benefits.

The new Letter Agreement on Retiree Premium Offset Accounts comes at a time when many large employers have increased the retiree share of premium payments.

## New RPOA Benefit

Retirees will be able to use this new RPOA allotment to reduce 25% of their required monthly premium contributions.

### Example 1:

I retired in 1993. I had 26 years of service when I retired.

I will receive a new RPOA increase of \$3,300.

I am a member of the Kaiser Medicare Advantage plan and cover myself and spouse.

My monthly contribution without the new RPOA is \$386.36.

Using my new RPOA, my contribution will be reduced by \$96.59. (\$386.36 X 25%)

My new contribution will be \$289.77.

### Example 2:

I retired in 1997. I had 25 years of service when I retired.

I will receive a new RPOA increase of \$1,650.

I am a member of the Network Access plan and only cover myself.

My monthly contribution without the new RPOA is \$282.09.

Using my new RPOA, my contribution will be reduced by \$70.52. (\$282.09 X 25%)

My new contribution will be \$211.57.

### Example 3:

I retired in 1985. I had 20 years of service.

I am in Health Net Seniority Plus. I cover myself and spouse.

I will receive a new RPOA of \$2,200. I worked 2/3's of the years necessary to receive the full \$3,300 RPOA.

My monthly contribution without the new RPOA is \$173.06.

Using my new RPOA, my contribution will be reduced by \$43.27 (\$173.06 X 25%)

My new contribution will be \$129.79.

## Administrative Processes Being Considered

- Retirees who have any money remaining from their initial 50% offset account allotment, deemed 50% RPOA, will be required to deplete this allotment before using their 25% account allotment, deemed 25% RPOA.
- Retirees cannot use money from their 50% RPOA and 25% RPOA in the same month. For example, a retiree who only has \$8 left in his 50% RPOA will only be able to reduce his required contribution by \$8 for the run-out month. He must pay the full excess contribution during that month.
- Retirees who use up their 50% RPOA during a plan year and have a 25% RPOA will automatically begin their 25% RPOA the following month. They cannot cancel RPOA during a plan year.
- The 25% and 50% RPOAs will show up as separate amounts on the retiree pension remittance.
- During Open Enrollment, retirees will only have a "yes/no" choice in using RPOA. They will not be able to choose "50% RPOA" or "25% RPOA".
- The Company will send impacted retirees a letter in late May (dates to be determined) informing them of their specific allotment and usage process. If a retiree has depleted his 50% RPOA so is currently not using RPOA, he may call the HR Service Center to initiate his 25% RPOA.
- The underlying retiree eligibility rules and allocation practices will mirror those used for determining the existing 50% RPOA eligibility and amounts, e.g. spouses can inherit RPOA.

“Right now I can bring you to this wall map (if software fails). At the new center, if the software goes down, where do you go?”

—Kelton Crawford,  
System Operator, Edenvale



**System Operators see  
the Big Picture  
...and they want to keep it.**

# Map Flap

Story and Photos by Eric Wolfe



“It is foolish to believe that a microcircuit outage spanning across square feet of highly congested wall map, and involving dozens of de-energized circuits, can be replaced with equal safety and efficiency on a computer screen if the operator’s only reference is a 19-inch computer screen.”

—Glenn M...  
System Operator, San Francisco

**T**he room goes black just as you’re sitting down to help the kids with their evening homework. Some minutes or hours later, power races back into all your appliances, lighting up your life. You can see again.

There are many roads to darkness. But the journey back to light is well-charted terrain, navigated by an esoteric group of specialists schooled in the illuminating arts. They work in large bunker-like rooms, surrounded by huge wall maps displaying the electric circuits that prop up our civilization. The maps, stretching from floor to ceiling and studded with colored pins, are a snap shot of the electric distribution system. The maps tell you if switches are open or closed, they tell you alternative paths for routing power when something goes wrong, they warn you of the presence of people working on the line.

System Operators are the IBEW members entrusted by Pacific Gas and Electric with the responsibility of getting it right, which means restoring power as soon as possible without getting someone injured or killed. System Operators play for high stakes, every day. There is no room for false data or false steps. When

operators tackle trouble, they need the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. With their wall maps they get something pretty close to it.

Now PG&E wants to take the wall maps away.

Let’s start over. The room goes black just as you’re sitting down to help the kids with their evening homework. Almost everything that you thought was essential to your existence is suddenly inoperable. Something’s gone wrong. Here are some of the ways that things go wrong:

- Despite the laws against it, some drunken citizen driving home from the bar decides a power pole would make a great hood ornament.
- Despite the odds against it, California gets blasted by a “hundred year storm.”
- Despite aggressive state regulations for the inspection and maintenance of the electric system, a \$50 insulator fails.

Someone reports an outage. A PG&E Troublemaker speeds to the area to make a visual inspection. Maybe it’s that drunk driver, married to a power pole—with an electric line draped over the top of the car. Is the line live?

Field conditions sometimes dictate that, in the interests of safety, the circuit needs to be de-energized immediately. But which circuit? Can you re-route power around one small area, minimizing the outage, or do you have to take down a larger chunk of the system?

These are the kinds of decisions faced every day by the System Operator, sometimes called Distribution Operator, or simply DO. When there is a problem reported on a circuit, you’ll find DO’s jumping to their feet, studying the map, refreshing their memories about pre-existing conditions in the area—conditions that may dictate what they can or cannot do.

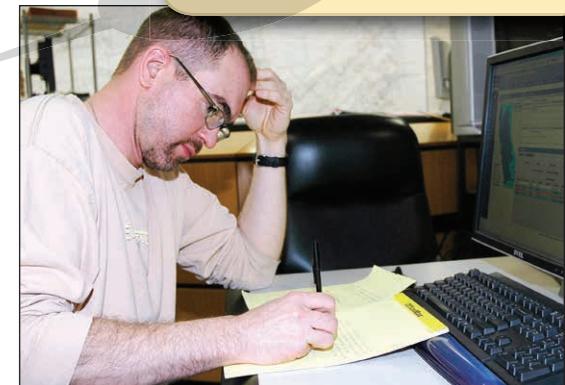
Distribution Supervisor John Herberner has seen his share of outages. With 35 years at PG&E, 34 of them in the IBEW, five as a System Operator, Herberner knows that a successful response sometimes requires rapid, informed decisions by the DO’s. Are computer maps up to the challenge?

“If field conditions dictated a circuit needed to be de-energized immediately, I feel a DO could make that decision more expeditiously with the help of the current wall maps,” he says.

Is all change good? Advertisers are convinced that people are always ready for something “new and improved.” PG&E is apparently convinced there’s a new and improved way of mapping the electric distribution system. Under a plan now in the works, the company’s 182 System Operators will be consolidated into four centers—three distribution centers in Concord, Auburn and Fresno, and a transmission center in Vacaville.

There will be no wall maps in the new facilities.

“They don’t have room for them,” la-



ments Mike Davis, a DO in Edenvale who also happens to be president of the union.

But couldn’t the new facilities be constructed to accommodate the wall maps?

“They’re hellbent on projection maps,” he shrugs.

Projection maps don’t live on walls. They live in computers. But why should that be a problem? Aren’t lots of things on computer screens these days? Doesn’t that mean that everything should be?

Take PG&E’s Outage Information System. OIS is a simulated wall map that is displayed on a computer monitor.

“You can zoom out and see all the circuits but you can’t see any detail,” says Terre Wortman, another Edenvale DO. “When you zoom in to get detail, you lose the big picture.”

“On a computer you have to keep dragging the next page up—you can’t put everything on one screen,” says PG&E Troublemaker David “Chewy” Guillen.

Guillen, a 16-year IBEW member, gazes around the Edenvale operations room, where wall maps depict the electric grid in Silicon Valley. “The maps are good to look at. If a switch is not working out in the field and it’s ‘pinned’ on the

“The comfort level of having these maps in here for field personnel is unmeasurable.”

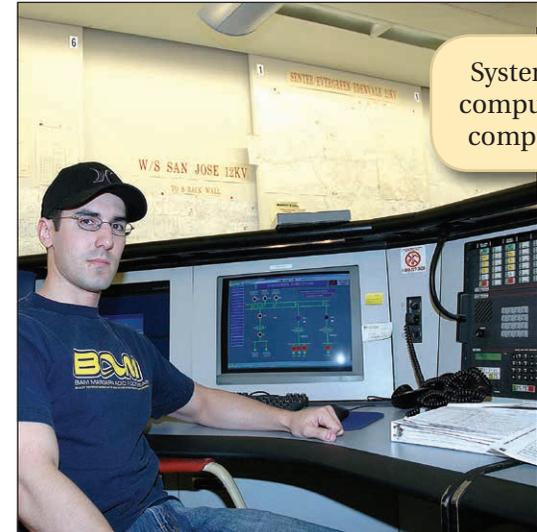
—John Herberner,  
Distribution Supervisor,  
Edenvale



Scott Forman, foreground, is an Assistant System Operator in San Francisco.



System Operator Louis Lo checks the network using wall maps at the San Francisco operations center.

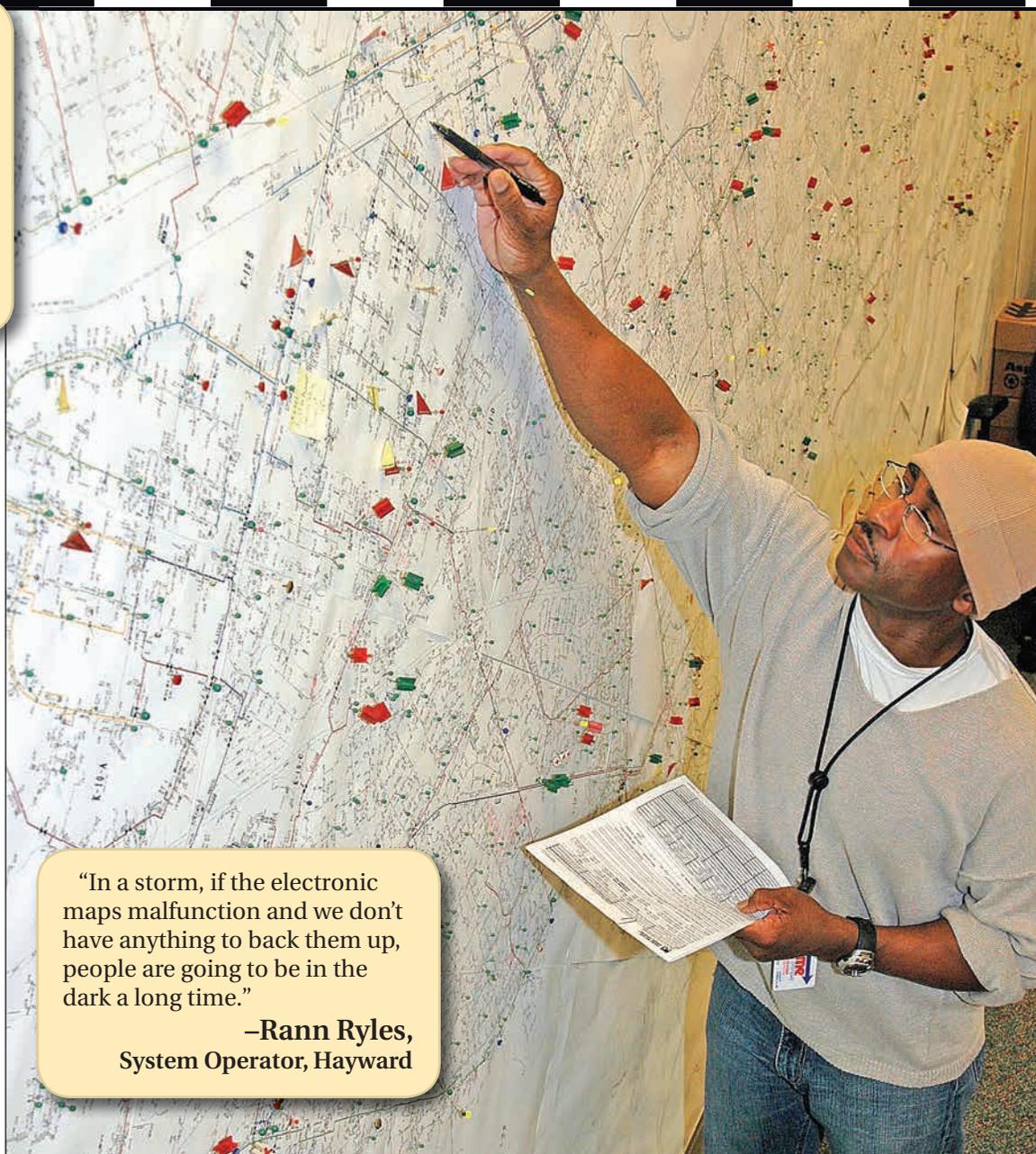


Ryan Thompson is an Apprentice System Operator in Edenvale.

System Operator  
computer photo  
computers all

major  
several  
wall  
devices  
fought  
when  
a 21-

artin,  
ncisco



“In a storm, if the electronic maps malfunction and we don’t have anything to back them up, people are going to be in the dark a long time.”

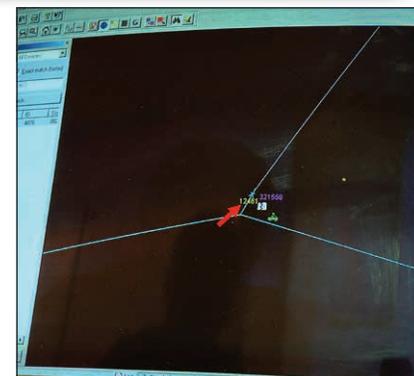
—Rann Ryles,  
System Operator, Hayward



“With electronic maps you’re not going to be able to see where you’ve come from and where you’re going. With a wall map you can see everything.”  
—Jerry Waylett,  
System Operator, Hayward



ABOVE: Edenvale System Operator Terre Wortman consults the map. “Why change a system that works?” he asks.



With computer maps you can see a very small section in detail (ABOVE) or the whole system with no detail (BELOW), but not both at the same time.



map, I can see it. All the time I come in here, just to get the big picture.”

Understanding the big picture, it turns out, matters.

“Bring up one map (on a computer), I have no idea what kind of abnormal situations there might be somewhere else,” says Herbner, the Distribution Supervisor. “It inhibits me from submitting the clearance—not knowing if I can do what I need to do.”

“With electronic maps you’re not going to be able to see where you’ve come from and where you’re going,” says Jerry Waylett, a Hayward-based DO with 25 years experience at PG&E. “With a wall map you can see everything.”

ators aren’t  
obic. They use  
the time.

System Operators aren’t computer phobic. They use computers all the time.

Which may explain some of the unease they feel about eliminating wall maps.

“We have various pieces of software we use,” says Kelton Crawford. DO’s use a program called ILIS, for example, to obtain switch log numbers. “You can’t do the work if you can’t identify the switches,” he explains.

When ILIS goes down, DO’s have to make up numbers, in effect creating a local numbering system from scratch. Hardly a model of efficiency, but it only

becomes an issue when software fails.

Reassured? Don’t be.

“During a majority of storms, one piece of software goes down,” says Crawford, who works in Edenvale. “Right now I can bring you to this wall map (if software fails). At the new center, if the software goes down, where do you go?”

David Montoya spends a lot of time thinking about these things. A Lead System Operator in San Francisco, he serves on a union committee examining the fall-out from PG&E’s consolidation plan.

“We can lose everything but still operate if we have (paper) maps and a means of communication,” he says. “If the computers go down we can’t operate.”

“In a storm, if the electronic maps malfunction and we don’t have anything to back them up,” says Rann Ryles, a DO based in Hayward, “people are going to be in the dark a long time.”

“Situation normal” to an operator is a system that’s functioning in a state of dynamic equilibrium, delivering power to where it’s needed. When something malfunctions, an operator’s instinct is to get the system back to a state of grace, defined in our age as “lights on.” System Operators are conservative by nature. It’s an occupational bias.

IBEW members can be almost fanati-

cal in their commitment to service reliability. Just try getting a lineman to go home during a storm when the neighborhood he’s working in is still dark. It practically takes a court order.

The operations room is the temple of service reliability, and System Operators are perhaps the most devout practitioners of the faith. In a very real sense they view the grid as their universe. They feel protective toward the system they operate, and are naturally alert to anything that threatens it.

Wall maps are the visible representation of that universe, the primary means by which operators stay in touch—in communion you might say—with that universe.

Waylett, the Hayward DO, wants to make sure you’re clear on this concept: “The wall maps are our bible.”

It’s a metaphor that keeps popping up, as it did when Norman Harris came into

the Edenvale operations room one day last month to check something on the map.

“These are the most updated reliable maps we have,” says Harris, a Distribution Engineer and ESC member with 22 years at PG&E. “They’re my bible as it relates to the system. I’m in here probably every day.”

Those entrusted with system reliability—DO’s, troublemen, engineers—are not opposed to technology. They’re conservative, yes, but they’re not some sort of modern-day Luddites harboring secret wishes to smash machinery. They know the technology. They understand that software can be useful.

“I don’t mind change,” says Ryles, the Hayward DO. “I don’t mind adapting to new things. But let me see it first.”

Well, sure. Let them see it first. If you’re going to monkey with a system that successfully keeps the lights on, talk to the people responsible for operating that system. Let them see what you have in mind.

But the prospect of creating something “new and improved” can be intoxicating. The corporate imperative to “innovate” can sometimes devalue the tried and true. DO’s, it turns out, were not consulted about PG&E’s consolida-

Continued on page 16.



System Operator Jackie Sagote uses the wall map in San Francisco as she writes switching to restore “circuits normal” after trouble.

# Outside Construction

Crane certification classes will be held March 26-30 in Vacaville. Applications are due by March 9. Call Cal-Nev JATC at 951-685-8858.



Ron Cochran, Senior Business Rep.

The union has tee-shirts and sweatshirts available at the Vacaville office. Ask at the front desk. We will soon have hats, coffee mugs and ladies tee-shirts.

The "member down fund" is still under active consideration. We're looking at ways to help members get to know each other better. One suggestion is to have a social event, like a Saturday night poker tournament at Weakley Hall in Vacaville. This idea has been well received. Union staff members are fact finding to see if this plan is feasible. More to come.

Work is very slow. DWP just released \$131 million in work. Local 47 says they will call 30-40 linemen March 9. PG&E says they will put back some of the pole replacement budget soon. There will be a lot of work inside the oil refineries in the Bay Area this year. It is a good time to update your BATC cards and First Aid and CPR cards—these are requirements to work in the oil refineries.

#### Out-of-work books as of Feb. 14:

- Lineman 1: 28
- Lineman 2: 39
- Lineman 3: 2
- Lineman 4: 10
- Cable Splicer 1: 1
- Cable Splicer 2: 3
- Cable Splicer 3: 2
- LEM 1: 4
- LEM 2: 7
- LEM 3: 3
- Groundman 1: 28
- Groundman 2: 9
- Groundman 3: 28
- Groundman 4: 66

#### Dispatch report for January 2007 –job referrals:

- Linemen: 45
- Line Equipment Man: 12
- Groundman: 11
- Cable Splicers: 2



Business Manager Tom Dalzell discusses the current work picture in Outside Line.

## Stewards Conference salutes the past, looks to the future

# Defending the members, protecting the work, building the union

Story and photos by Eric Wolfe

When Harry Bridges, the legendary leader of the Longshoreman's union, strolls into Ronald T. Weakley Hall in Vacaville and begins reminiscing about the great San Francisco General Strike of 1934, you know you're experiencing history. Especially considering that Bridges died in 1990.

But it's hard to believe that Bridges *stayed* dead when you see actor Ian Ruskin pace the room brandishing a bottle of whiskey and reflecting on decades of labor struggle. Ruskin breathes life back into the irreverent, irrepressible labor leader: Bridges on strike. In jail. Defying Congress.

And this too: Bridges' lawyers, his daughter, his several marriages ... and most of all his fierce loyalty to the members of his union—and to the working class he stood with to the end.

For those attending the Local 1245 stewards conference in Vacaville on Feb. 10, a bracing whiff of Harry Bridges put the role of the union in proper perspective. Makes you realize you're part of something much bigger, something that was around before you came along, and—because you added

something to it—will still be around when you've left the scene.

Local 1245 stewards don't spend a lot of time on strike, in jail, or being grilled by Congressional committees. But it rubs you wrong—just like it did Bridges—to see a member kicked around, or union standards being trampled, or union work disappearing. And the great thing about being a union steward is that you are sometimes in a position to do something about it.

The conference on Feb. 10 was organized to give stewards knowledge they can use to defend individual members, protect the work and build union strength. In attendance were



Local 1245 staff members running the Feb. 10 conference were, from left, Dispatcher Kelly Dark, Business Rep. Larry Thomson, Administrative Associate Nancy Kendrick, Senior Business Rep. Ron Cochran and Dispatcher Gina Britt.

*Dalzell praised the role of union stewards in resolving workplace disputes, noting that the best grievance outcomes are usually those that are settled by stewards on the spot.*



Kurt Celli, Modesto Irrigation District



Business Rep. Landis Marttila discusses things stewards should keep in mind when responding to Cal-OSHA investigators looking into an accident.



Jesse Frieling discusses a recent accident in a neighboring jurisdiction.



George Smith, Outside Line



Groundman Craig Abbott, Outside Line

stewards from Outside Line, Sacramento Regional Transit, Modesto Irrigation District, Turlock Irrigation District, Western Area Power Administration, and US Bureau of Reclamation.

Business Manager Tom Dalzell discussed an issue of major concern right now among Outside Line members: PG&E's recent decision to scale back construction work for contractors.

Union contractors can be a valuable supplement to PG&E's regular workforce, but large fluctuations in the available work is disruptive to the lives of Outside Line members and does not serve the utility's interests in the long run, Dalzell said. Outside Line members may decide to seek work elsewhere, making it more difficult for PG&E to find experienced workers when it decides to ramp up again.

Dalzell praised the role of union stewards in resolving workplace disputes, noting that the best grievance outcomes are usually those that are settled by stewards on the spot.

Senior Business Rep. Ron Cochran, the principal organizer of the conference, offered a brief update on issues affecting Outside Line members. But most of the day was devoted to discussing the role that stewards play at the jobsite, and how they can play that role effectively.

Business Rep. Landis Marttila discussed the roles and responsibilities of the Local 1245 steward, including some jobsite situations that require judgment calls on the part of the steward. Responding to worksite accidents and OSHA investigations were among the

topics covered.

Business Rep. Sam Glero reviewed the "seven tests" used to determine if discipline has been for "just cause."

Senior Business Rep. Ray Thomas discussed the Supreme Court's historic Weingarten ruling (NLRB v. Weingarten, Inc.), which established an employee's right to have a union representative present at a meeting that may, in the employee's opinion, result in disciplinary action.

In "Grievances 101," Business Rep. Lynne Morel explained that grievance procedures vary from contract to contract, and that grievances must be grounded in the language of the contract you're dealing with. When a jobsite problem arises, a good way to determine if there is a contractual violation, said Morel, is to ask the five "W" questions: What happened, who was involved, when did it happen, where did it happen, and why did it happen?

Business Rep. Darryl Norris dis-

cussed the importance of filing grievances in a timely manner, conducting a thorough investigation, and keeping good records of your investigation.

Executive Board member Mike Cottrell described the Outside Line steward's role at the jobsite.

So, do you think you have what it takes to be a steward? Let your business representative know. Next time it might be *your* turn to meet Harry Bridges.



Richard Lane of Turlock Irrigation District, left, raises an issue with Business Rep. Sam Glero during a break.



File grievances on time, investigate thoroughly, keep good records, advises Business Rep. Darryl Norris.



Senior Business Rep. Ray Thomas discusses steward rights established in the Supreme Court's Weingarten decision.



Grievances need to be grounded in contract language, says Business Rep. Lynne Morel.



Outside Line Apprentice Paul Rex

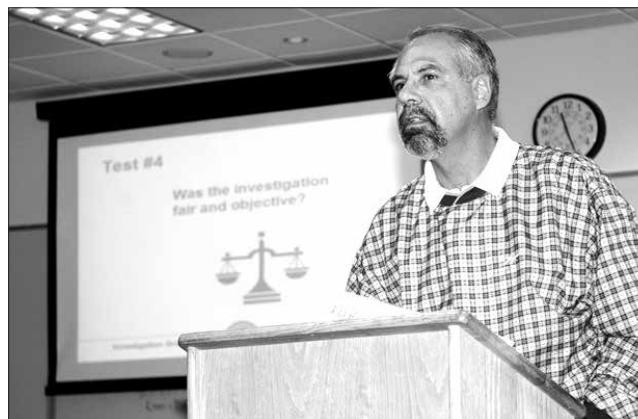


Lawrence Horne, Outside Line

(Right) Executive Board member Mike Cottrell discusses the role of the Outside Line steward at the jobsite.



(Far right) Business Rep. Sam Glero discusses the seven tests for "just cause."



A capacity crowd turned out for the stewards conference.

## Attendees

Abbot, Craig D.  
Anderson, Robert P.  
Archuleta, Louis  
Armstrong, Ralph  
Avey, R.S.  
Baker, Aaron  
Baker, Jeff  
Bartlett, Lauren L.  
Bibbs, Constance  
Brown, Vern  
Case, Cory  
Celli, Kurt  
Dahms, David P.  
Dickerson, Dwayne  
Dickson, Aaron P.  
Dollarhide, Terry  
Dryden, Val  
Evans, Dean  
Felber, Mark  
Fields, Ken  
Finney, Shane  
Frieling, Jessie  
Gilliam, William  
Gomes, Michael  
Gross, Ken  
Hall, Bill  
Hess, Chris  
Horne, Lawrence  
Kelly, Casey

Lane, Richard  
McIntire, Robby  
Mora, Nathaniel  
Pasero, Justin  
Paulsen, William  
Perez, Shawn  
Perotti, Michael  
Phares, Michael  
Phelps, Ron  
Pipis, Patrick  
Rex, Paul  
Rohl, Ted  
Sanchez, Anthony  
Sauers, Shawn  
Skordas, Robert  
Smith, George  
Stein, Scott  
Witte, Dan

## Staff:

Asher, Leslie  
Cochran, Ron  
Dalzell, Tom  
Glero, Sam  
Marttila, Landis  
Morel, Lynne  
Norris, Darryl  
Thomas, Ray  
Thomson, Larry  
Wolfe, Eric

## PG&E's Six Sigma Project

# New look at residential construction

By Marlayne Morgan

Small residential new construction work is getting a new look by PG&E's Six Sigma project.

In early January, three IBEW members and three ESC members met with various PG&E managers and specialists to re-examine assumptions made around consolidating small residential new construction into Resource Management Centers (RMCs) rather than keeping the work in local headquarters.

Through the use of Six Sigma, an analysis tool designed in the 1980s and



Representing IBEW Local 1245 on the Six Sigma project are (from left) Jeff Johnson, Operating Clerk, Auburn; Pam Brinkley, Operating Clerk, Concord RMC; and Maureen Bird, Work Resource Coordinator, Santa Rosa.

used at General Electric and Motorola as well as many other large and small companies, the team challenged the original assumptions by tracking jobs through every phase of the construction process and identifying non-productive time lags. The unanimous recommendation: small residential construction, which comprises about 8% of total construction each year, should be kept in the local headquarters.

PG&E Chief Operating Officer Bill Morrow, IBEW Local 1245 Business Manager Tom Dalzell and others gather for an update on the Six Sigma project examining small residential new construction work.



**PG&E Counters**, from page 1  
Petaluma, Half Moon Bay and Geyersville.

To address the impacts of the closures, Letter Agreement 07-11 provides affected employees with "enhanced choices" including accelerated bidding rights, relocation, and Transformation benefits.

Final implementation of Letter Agreement 07-11 is contingent upon the

**Operating**, from page 1

have now crafted a solution that could bring displacements all the way to zero, while opening up opportunities for voluntary severance. This is good news."

In a joint statement to PG&E employees, Dalzell and PG&E Senior Vice President Russ Jackson noted that the letter agreement "provides for the soliciting of an expanded group of classifications who may volunteer for severance. Upon receiving the list of volunteers, PG&E will use a phased approach by accepting a certain number of severance requests when reductions are warranted due to the implementation of new technology or procedures."

The company will hold meetings in late February and early March for Operating Clerical and certain Physical Clerical employees to address specific details and answer questions, according to the joint statement. (See the joint statement as well as the text of the agreement at [www.ibew1245.com](http://www.ibew1245.com))

Workforce Transition Benefits previously negotiated by the union in Letter Agreements 05-66 and 06-18 will be

settlement receiving all necessary approvals as well as ratification by affected employees in the Clerical bargaining unit. Employees will be provided with their options once the settlement has been ratified.

Report dates and severance dates will be determined by the company and are expected to coincide with the actual closure of the employee's office.

available to impacted Operating Clerical employees who accept the voluntary severance. These benefits may include a Transitional Leave of Absence for employees aged 52 and above, an Educational Leave of Absence and a Financial Planning Seminar.

Operating Clerical employees who wish to maintain employment with PG&E will also have several Workforce Transition Benefits available to them, including assistance with career planning, additional consideration for entry level bargaining unit and A&T vacancies, additional testing opportunities and test preparation workshops, an increased relocation allowance and an increased tuition refund allowance

The letter agreement acknowledged that the voluntary approach ultimately "may not capture all of the needed reductions," but stressed that the use of displacement procedures is "the least desirable option." In support of this principle, PG&E agreed to explore the use of existing contractual options to address staffing imbalances on a temporary basis.

Six Sigma's approach is to break down a problem into its smallest components. Through collaboration, and the absence of pre-conceived solutions, this process often comes up with unexpected recommendations.

"Six Sigma has demonstrated what we have been saying all along—you need to hear from the people who are doing the work," said Local 1245 Business Manager Tom Dalzell. "We are now exploring the possibility of a Six Sigma team to work on outage issues."

The current team is wrapping up the first stage of their work, which involved studying and visiting five local headquarters to ask for input and feedback on their conclusions.

"This has been a very rewarding experience," said Jeff Johnson, Operating Clerk from Auburn. "It shows once again how we can make a big difference for our customers by significantly reducing wait times for service."

Marlayne Morgan is assistant to Business Manager Tom Dalzell.



## Oroville, CA January 26, 2007



35 years: Rodney Dyer, left, and Donald Silva, right, receive 35-year awards from Business Manager Tom Dalzell.



30 years: Gary Covert, Robert Stout and George Bell receive 30-year awards.



25-years: Stephen Niegel and John Hursh receive 25-year awards.

### THE HONOREES

#### 40 Years

Darrell McMaster

#### 35 Years

Rodney Dyer  
Richard Kappel  
Ron Murphy  
Donald Silva  
Kenneth E Smith  
Harold Friemark  
Kent Massey  
Mike Mathis  
Robert Seaman  
Donald Thomas

#### 30 Years

George Bell  
Robert Bell  
Aric Cook  
Gary Covert  
Lee Deadmond  
Marsha Hagler  
Dan Hogan  
John S Little  
William Malacky  
Merritt Monroe  
Calvin Moss  
Robert Parker  
David Poliquin  
Scott Stalder

Robert Stout  
William Weeks  
David West

#### 25 Years

James Anderson  
William Arave  
Eileen Bird  
Lynn Blodgett  
Suzanne Cleland  
John E Franklin  
John H. Hursh  
John H. Johnston III  
Stephen Niegel  
Chris Sawyer  
Norman Stanberry



## Safety conference

Members of the IBEW Local 1245 Safety Committee will represent the union at the Spring Meeting of the National Safety Council and IBEW Safety Caucus to be held April 29-May 3 in Pittsburgh, PA. The committee members were appointed at the February meeting of the Local 1245 Executive Board.

### Local 1245 Safety Committee

Members of the IBEW Local 1245 Safety Committee are Al White, Pacific Gas & Electric; David Vipond, Frontier; ; Bob Burkle, City of Santa Clara; Keith Hopp, Pacific Gas & Electric; Michael Gomes, Modesto Irrigation District; Art Torres, Sacramento Municipal Utility District; and Sergio Munoz, Asplundh Tree. Senior Business Rep. Larry Pierce will serve as staff liaison during the medical leave of Assistant Business Manager Howard Stiefer.

Check out the safety information on our website at: [www.ibew1245.com/safety-section/safety.html](http://www.ibew1245.com/safety-section/safety.html)

## Accident claims Robert Curutchet

Robert Curutchet, a Gas Transmission Foreman at PG&E and 15-year member of IBEW Local 1245, died in a car accident on Jan. 27 on Highway 162 and Avenue 15 in Chowchilla near his home.

Brother Curutchet, 36, has traveled throughout the PG&E system working on many large projects. He is survived by his wife and 3 step-children.

The family is in the process of setting up a scholarship fund for their children. Checks payable to Laurie Curutchet can be sent to Renee Silveria at PG&E GC Superintendents Office, 4040 West Lane, Bldg. 2, Stockton, CA 95204.

Local 1245 offers its condolences to the friends, family and co-workers of Robert Curutchet.

## Back Exercises for People Who Sit

These easy back exercises are designed for people who sit. Taking a microbreak for back exercise can help realign a slouching spine. It can also relieve muscle tension caused by sitting. You'll feel an energy and circulation boost, too. Try these exercises at your desk, at home, or even in your car. You can take a few minutes for all six exercises, or just do one or two. But the more you do, the better you'll feel. Do each exercise slowly, stretching as far as you can. Then pause a moment (but don't hold), and release.

If you have had back problems in the past, or if you feel back pain during any of these exercises, stop and consult your health care provider before continuing.

### For Your Cervical Curve

#### Chin glide

**Why:** To help align your cervical curve.

**How:** Glide your chin straight back, keeping your head and ears level. (You'll know you're doing this exercise right if it gives you the feeling of a double chin.) Repeat 5 to 10 times, several times a day.



Neck poorly aligned

Glide your chin backward

Neck aligned properly

#### Shoulder Circles

**Why:** To release muscle tension in your neck, shoulders, and upper back.

**How:** Circle your shoulders backward in a wide arc. Make several circles, then relax. Repeat 5 to 10 times, several times a day. You can also circle your head, slowly and gently in either direction, to release tension in your neck and upper back.



Neck and shoulder tension

Circle your shoulders backward

Neck and shoulder relaxed

### For Your Thoracic Curve

#### Middle Back Stretch

**Why:** To realign your thoracic curve.

**How:** Bend both elbows and press one arm above you (as if you're trying to brush your ear with your elbow) and the other behind you. Press as far as you can stretch. Pause a moment, then release. Repeat 5 to 10 times on each side, several times a day.



Middle back poorly aligned

Press one arm above head, one arm behind

Middle back aligned properly

#### Elbow Press

**Why:** To release muscle tension in your middle back.

**How:** Bring your elbows out to the side at chest level. Press them gently backward as far as you can stretch. Pause a moment, then release. Repeat 5 to 10 times, several times a day. Try this when you feel a little stiff or tired.



Middle back tension

Press both elbows behind you

Middle back relaxed

### For Your Lumbar Curve

#### Reverse the Curve

**Why:** To reverse the "slouch curve" and release muscle tension in your lower back.

**How:** For your safety, stand up. Press your palms on your lower back for support, and gently bend backward. Pause a moment, then release. Repeat 5 to 10 times, several times a day.



Lower back poorly aligned

Stand and bend backward gently

Lower back aligned properly

#### Tummy Tuck

**Why:** To strengthen your abdominal muscles. These muscles help support your lower back and keep it aligned.

**How:** Sit with your buttocks firmly against the back of your chair. Exhale and tighten your abdominal muscles for a count of 10. Release. Repeat 5 to 10 times, several times a day.



Weak abdominal muscles

tighten and release your abdominals

Strong abdominals support your spine

Source: State Compensation Insurance Fund

## Skyline Tree Service signs with Local 1245

By Ray Thomas

Skyline Tree Service of Red Bluff, Ca. is now signatory to a line clearance tree trimming labor agreement with IBEW Local 1245.



Ray Thomas

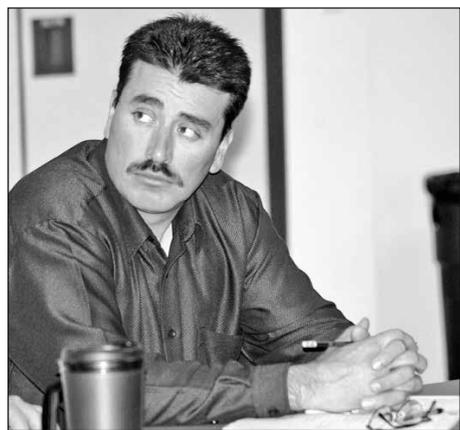
Meetings with Skyline began last September and culminated in a two-year agreement effective Jan. 1, 2007.

The agreement covers contract work performed for PG&E, SMUD, City of Shasta Lake, City of Redding and the City of Palo Alto.

With PG&E emphasizing that its line clearance contractors utilize minority-owned businesses, Skyline Tree Service will make a great signatory subcontractor. Skyline is recognized by the California Department of Transportation as a minority-owned business.

Skyline also expects to receive minority-owned status with PG&E in the very near future. If not utilized as a minority-owned subcontractor, Skyline may also decide to work as a prime contractor on one of the utility properties.

Currently Skyline is mainly a residential contractor in the North Valley. Skyline is owned by Frank and Autumn Fales of Red Bluff. The Fales' family heritage is linked strongly to North Coast logging. Danger tree felling and removal are a specialty of the company.



Sergio Muñoz, Asplundh Tree Crew Foreman, represented line clearance tree trimmers at the February meeting of the Local 1245 Advisory Council, following the resignation of Carl Lamers. Muñoz is a shop steward, member of the Local 1245 Safety Committee, and a past member of the bargaining committee.

Sergio Muñoz, capataz de grupo de Asplundh Tree, representó a los podadores de árboles que trabajan en la limpieza de líneas eléctricas durante la reunión de febrero del Consejo Asesor del Local 1245, después de la renuncia del Sr. Carl Lamers. El Sr. Muñoz es un delegado sindical, miembro del Comité de Seguridad del Local 1245 y un antiguo miembro del comité de negociaciones de salario del Sindicato.

As a minority-owned and union-signatory line clearance contractor, I believe that the future for Skyline is bright.

## Skyline Tree Service firma un convenio con el Local 1245

por Ray Thomas

Skyline Tree Service de Red Bluff, California ha firmado un convenio laboral para la limpieza de líneas con el Local 1245 de la IBEW.

Las reuniones con Skyline comenzaron el pasado mes de septiembre y culminaron en un convenio de dos años que entró en vigor el 1° de enero de 2007.

El convenio cubre todo el trabajo ejecutado para PG&E, SMUD, la ciudad de Shasta Lake, la ciudad de Redding y la ciudad de Palo Alto.

PG&E enfatizó que sus contratistas para la limpieza de líneas utilizaran subcontratistas minoritarios y Skyline Tree Service es un subcontratista que cumple con ese requisito. Skyline es una firma reconocida por el Departamento de Transporte de California como una empresa cuyos propietarios son miembros de minorías étnicas.

Skyline también espera recibir la clasificación de empresa minoritaria de PG&E en un futuro muy cercano. Si no es utilizada como una firma subcontratista minoritaria, Skyline también podrá decidir trabajar como un contratista primario en alguna de las propiedades de la compañía de servicios públicos.

Actualmente, Skyline es principalmente un contratista residencial en la región Norte del Valle. Skyline es de propiedad de Frank y Autumn Fales de Red Bluff. La historia de la familia Fales está ligada fuertemente con la industria maderera de la costa norte. La compañía está especializada en trabajar con árboles que están en peligro de caerse y en retirarlos de sus localizaciones.

Como un contratista minoritario para la limpieza de líneas, que ha firmado un convenio laboral con el Sindicato, yo creo que el futuro de Skyline es muy brillante.

Ray Thomas es el Representante Principal de Negocios del Local 1245 de la IBEW.

## Protect your seniority

To all Local 1245 Line Clearance Tree Trimmers and Vegetation Control Members:

Local 1245 wants to remind you of the importance of your Local 1245 "Union Seniority" which is governed by your current 1245 membership initiation date.

If your current employer loses your contract area to another contractor who is signatory to Local Union 1245, your Union Seniority protects you in two major ways: 1. Union Seniority determines the priority in which Union Members are retained by the new employer. 2. Union Seniority determines the level of PTO or vacation you shall receive with the new employer.

Subject to the Bylaws of IBEW Local Union 1245, you must not let your membership lapse for 3 months or more if you want to retain your current initiation date. Simply put, if you become 3 months or more in arrears with your dues payment, you will lose your former initiation date, and receive a new date, which will affect the benefits of your Union Seniority.

If you are off of work due to injury, Family Medical Leave, Military Leave etc, you may pay non-working dues by contacting the Union at (707) 452-2700. Also, it is very important to remind newly hired employees to fill out their membership packets as soon as possible in order to secure their respective Union Seniority dates.

Ray Thomas  
Senior Business Representative

## Proteja su antigüedad

A todos los trabajadores de limpieza de líneas, poda de árboles y control de la vegetación que son miembros del Local 1245:

Una vez más, el Local 1245 quiere recordarles la importancia de su "Antigüedad en el Local 1245 del Sindicato", la que es gobernada por su fecha actual de iniciación como miembro del Local 1245.

Si su presente empleador pierde su área de contrato a otro contratista, que también opere con personal del Local 1245, su antigüedad en el Sindicato lo protegerá de dos formas importantes: 1. Su antigüedad en el Sindicato determina la prioridad con que los miembros del Sindicato son retenidos por su nuevo empleador. 2. Su antigüedad en el Sindicato determina la cantidad de tiempo con paga sin trabajar, o tiempo de vacaciones, que usted recibirá de su nuevo empleador.

De acuerdo con los Estatutos del Local 1245 del Sindicato IBEW, usted no

debe dejar que expire su condición de miembro del Local durante 3 meses o más, si desea retener su fecha actual de iniciación en el Local. En forma más simple, si usted deja de pagar sus cuotas de miembro durante 3 meses o más, perderá su antigua fecha de iniciación y recibirá una nueva fecha, lo que afectará los beneficios de su antigüedad en el Sindicato.

Si no puede trabajar debido a alguna lesión, o por motivo de un permiso de ausencia de tipo médico o familiar, o de servicio militar, usted puede reducir la cantidad que debe pagar por sus cuotas si llama al Sindicato por el teléfono (707) 452-2700. También es muy importante recordarles a los nuevos empleados, acabados de contratar, que deben llenar sus documentos de miembro del Local tan pronto como sea posible, para así poder establecer sus fechas respectivas de iniciación y su antigüedad en el Sindicato.

Ray Thomas, Representante Principal de Negocios Tree Clearance

## Democratic tax cuts

The new Democratic-controlled Congress is looking to rein in looming tax increases on the middle class, possibly covering the cost by raising taxes on upper-income households, the Wall Street Journal reported. And the Bush administration may not stand in the way.

The possible bargain centers on the Alternative Minimum Tax, a kind of parallel income tax that hit 3.5 million US taxpayers in the 2006 tax year. Congressional Democrats are eager to keep the AMT from ensnaring millions more middle-class taxpayers. They also must find a way to cover the estimated \$50 billion cost of scaling back the tax this year.

In recent days, Bush administration officials have signaled they may not oppose a likely method of covering those costs: raising taxes on the nation's wealthiest citizens. That concession could mark the beginning of a bigger debate on revisiting the Bush tax cuts, which could ultimately lead to reversing at least some of the cuts given to upper-income Americans over the past six years.

Union Plus Mortgage & Real Estate

### A mortgage program with you in mind

The Union Plus Mortgage & Real Estate program was designed with you in mind. Whether you have great credit or less than perfect credit, we'll try to help.



call 1-800-848-6466 or visit [www.unionplus.org/mortgage](http://www.unionplus.org/mortgage)



Get the latest news at

[www.ibew1245.com](http://www.ibew1245.com)

# WORKING Women



## US lags in workplace policies for families

Only five countries in the world do not guarantee some form of paid maternity leave, according to a new study by Harvard and McGill University researchers: Lesotho, Liberia, Swaziland, Papua New Guinea and ... the United States.

The study, released Feb. 1, found that

workplace policies for families in the United States are weaker than those of every other high-income country. The United States, which often lays claim to the title of "highest living standard in the world," doesn't always measure up when you actually start looking at the numbers.

The new study should add fuel to a discussion now beginning in Washington DC over the current federal law that provides unpaid family leave. The Bush Administration wants to scale back the benefit to working parents, while some in Congress want to expand the benefit to include paid family leave.

Among the study's findings:

Fathers are granted paid paternity

### Letters, from page 3

toilet and the holding tank. Our son (bless him) cleaned it out for us. Then our water tank blew out, so he installed the new one for us and finished on Christmas Eve.

In spite of everything we are blessed, and we thank you all so much!

*Ellen Schug, Olympia, WA*

## Union gains

In February 1972, I started a long career with The City of Healdsburg as an Apprentice Lineman, not knowing that 35 years later, I would be retiring with the same outfit as an Electric Technician. My first days on the job were very educational in the fact that the Electric Department had just voted to become members in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which I knew nothing about. The two Linemen and Line Foreman informed me that it would be to my best interest to become a member, if I wanted better wages and benefits. I later found that wages at the City were far below average scale, and that we had very few benefits and working conditions needed improvement.

As I learned about negotiations where the Union and the City met to confer over wages and work improvements, it became clear to me that this was a concept that I wanted to participate in. After all it was for "my" well being.

During my first few years of employment I attended union meetings where I learned that not all negotiations were met with positives for both parties, and not all union members agreed on all issues. I learned that as a group we fared better than trying to negotiate individ-

ual concepts.

During those early years we negotiated overtime, holiday pay, sick leave, and vacation leave, as well as safety concerns for the employees. We also established a memorandum of understanding between IBEW and the City.

I can remember one particular union meeting we were having, when a Lineman from PG&E came to introduce himself to our members. He proclaimed that he would be running for IBEW president, and explained how he would be a driving force to help establish unity within the union and would appreciate our vote. That Lineman was Howard Stiefer. A few years later he and I would become related.

In 1978 I became the IBEW Shop Steward for the Electric Department, Public Works, and Clerical staff. I realized that I would not be a "favorite son" to management, since it would be I, informing them of employee rights, and enforcing the MOU. I would also be sitting across a negotiating table with a union representative bringing our members' needs to management's attention.

As each contract was negotiated, we struggled at times. We made small improvements, but were able to keep the MOU in place. We had a voice and respect from being part of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

In 1981, Tom Dalzell, IBEW Local 1245 staff attorney, came to the City of Healdsburg and introduced himself to me. He informed me that he would like to take over the negotiating duties for that contract year. I was a little nervous at first, not knowing the intent of a union staff attorney representing a small union group in Healdsburg.

Tom has a demeanor at the negotiating table that one has to experience.

leave or paid parental leave in 65 countries, including 31 offering at least 14 weeks of paid leave.

At least 107 countries protect working women's right to breast-feed; the breaks are paid in at least 73 of them. The US does not have federal legislation guaranteeing the right to breast-feed at work.

At least 145 countries provide paid sick days, with 127 providing a week or more annually. The US provides unpaid leave through the Family and Medical Leave Act, which does not cover all workers; there is no federal law providing for paid sick days.

At least 134 countries have laws setting the maximum length of the work week. The US does not have a maximum work week length or a limit on mandatory overtime per week.

In some cases, local governments have taken the lead in guiding the United States toward workplace policies that are more supportive of working

families. Recent legislation in California provides a maximum of six weeks of partial pay each year for workers taking time off from work to bond with a newborn baby, adopted or foster child, or to care for a seriously ill parent, child, spouse or registered domestic partner

Most workers will receive approximately 55% of their pre-taxed weekly wage, up to a maximum of \$840, while on leave.

The US Labor Department, under pressure from business groups to scale back family leave benefits, is reviewing current regulations. But Congress may be more in the mood to expand the benefit than to restrict.

Sen. Chris Dodd is proposing new legislation to enable workers to take six weeks of paid family leave. Congress also is expected to reconsider the Healthy Families Act, a bill introduced last session that would require employers with at least 15 employees to provide seven paid sick days per year.

Tom wins over the opposition with style, and has the ability to convince the other side that our gains will also benefit their needs. Tom's philosophy and guidance played a major role in my shop steward abilities and as a team we made major gains for union members.

As salary issues were most guarded by the City, we were able to move ahead with major benefit improvements. Most sections in the MOU were improved through every contract year.

Health and welfare benefits were our top priority in every contract year. To date we are one of the few places where medical, dental, and vision plans are provided at no cost to the employee. Two major accomplishments came in our last negotiated contract. We were able to, upon retirement, move unused sick leave (1000 hrs max) into a retirement health saving plan, which is like paid medical during retirement. We also improved our retirement plan formula from 2.0%@55 to 2.5%@55, which provides our members the opportunity to retire with 90% of their final year compensation. On top of that, we achieved a 21% monetary gain over four years.

With these benefit gains, thanks to Tom, I will enter into retirement status with the City of Healdsburg. I thought about why we were so fortunate to have Tom represent us through these years. Was it the lure of the country living experience, or was it because I was related to the President of IBEW?

All IBEW Local 1245 members now have the fortune to have the top business manager to provide the unity and expertise to guide all members in their quest for better working conditions.

Through the years of employment these benefit gains and improvements awarded to me and our membership were because of participation in IBEW. I

would like to thank IBEW and especially Tom for the assistance in providing me a great work environment, and I'm sure it will carry over into a great retirement.

*Larry Giovannoni, Healdsburg, Ca.*

## Good news

*Editor's note: The follow e-mail was received from Operating Clerk Jackie Van Ingen concerning the new letter agreements on retiree health benefits and operating clerical job security.*

Good news for retirees-and good news for those of us in Operating that have been living on edge wondering if we will have jobs. This voluntary severance may clear the way for some of the younger employees to stay on. Glad to see the results of the latest round of bargaining.

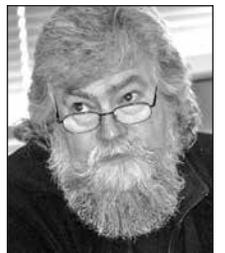
*Jackie Van Ingen, Los Osos, CA*

## Kapaun named to Advisory Council

Brian Kapaun has been appointed by the Local 1245 Executive Board to fill the vacant Advisory Council position representing PG&E General Construction.

Kapaun has previously served as an alternate to the Council, filling in behind Mike Saner. In 2002 Kapaun, a 1st Field Clerk, served on the PG&E General Bargaining subcommittee dealing with General Construction issues.

He is a 28-year member of Local 1245.



Brian Kapaun

**Map Flap, continued from page 9.**

tion plan. There was no room in corporate planning for the DO's conservative sensibility, no room in the new control centers for the DO's wall maps.

"We were told we were going to electronic mapping—we had no input at all," says Montoya, the San Francisco Lead System Operator.

"The only consulting we got," says Ryles, "is 'This is going to happen.'"

"You get so familiar with it you get a picture of it in your mind. It gets to be ingrained, that's what these maps do," says Wortman, the Edenvale DO. "And that's something management doesn't understand, but operators understand because they work with it every day."

Wortman is trying to explain how the wall maps attune DO's to the current state of the system. It's probably easier than trying to explain transubstantiation, but not by much.

"The comfort level of having these maps in here for field personnel is unmeasurable," says Herbner, the Distribution Supervisor. "Foremen from all over the area come in here and go to the wall maps prior to submitting clearances."

"Having the map on the wall allows the DO to take an overview of the entire jurisdiction and take notes on what needs to be addressed," says Glenn Martin, a San Francisco-based DO. "When you have the map on the wall everybody can gather around and analyze the situation together. It's teamwork."

It turns out that teamwork isn't just a corporate slogan. It's something that happens at a wall map—in an actual physical space—where people gather to "get a picture" in their mind. Does the problem span one circuit or many circuits? Are there any crews or T-men

in harm's way? Is there old abnormal switching for trouble that needs to be restored?

The need for this physical, tangible clarity is especially great when new crews arrive on the scene in a crisis, in response to an appeal for emergency aid.

"When outside crews come in, we can show them where they're going and they have the opportunity to see where their clearance points are and what other work is going on around them," says Crawford, the Edenvale DO.

The maps are knowledge, written large.

"The unknown scares any operator. You can't make a mistake in this job," says Waylett, the Hayward DO. "We're leery. Are the (electronic) maps going to be up to date? Are they 110% foolproof? They have to be foolproof. Somebody could get hurt out there."

DO's are not rebels. They're conservative, remember? Team players. You don't find them making a lot of waves. Unless they think something is really wrong.

They think the elimination of wall maps is a really big mistake.

"The people who made the decisions have never been in operations before," says Hendrick Han, a San Francisco DO.

"Why change a system that works?" asks Wortman, the Edenvale DO. "We've proven it to work safely and efficiently over time. Why change to something new, something unproven? It's alarming."

The system being implemented by PG&E is, in fact, unproven. No other utility in the country operates exclusively from computer maps, according to the DO's interviewed for this article. Some utilities are experimenting with computer maps, but even they are preserving



ABOVE: Lead System Operator David Montoya updates switching assignments as the San Francisco operations center.

"If a switch is not working out in the field and it's 'pinned' on the map, I can see it. All the time I come in here, just to get the big picture."  
**—David "Chewy" Guillen, T-man, Edenvale**



their wall maps as back up.

"I'm a man who likes to have a backup plan," says Ryles, the Hayward DO. "If the electronic maps fail I want to have something to work with."

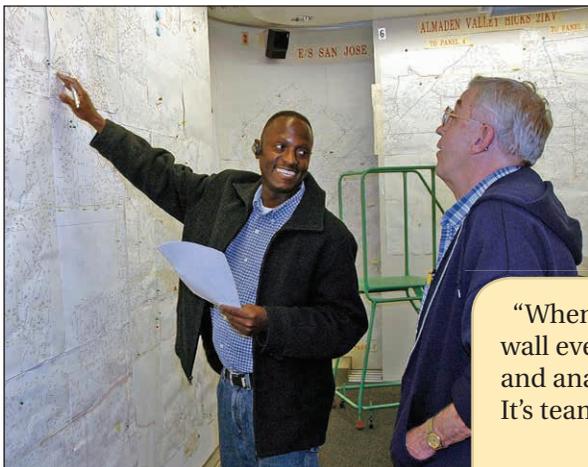
In an outage, he says "the paper map isn't going to malfunction—it's not going anywhere. You have the whole layout—you can see everything."

Martin, the San Francisco DO, shakes his head at the prospect of a world without wall maps. He writes down this observation on a piece of paper, like a note in a bottle addressed to anyone out in the great corporate sea who might be listening:

"It is foolish to believe that a major circuit outage spanning across several square feet of highly congested wall map, and involving dozens of devices and numerous backties, can be fought with equal safety and efficiency when the operator's only reference is a 21-inch computer screen."

"Chewy" Guillen, the T-man, points to the Edenvale wall map. When he begins to speak, it feels like a benediction:

"This is the way it was built, it works, it's been working since before my time. I think electronic maps will help the budget, but it's not going to help the restoration time. But we'll see."



Distribution Engineer Norman Harris, left, and System Operator Mike Davis consult the Edenvale wall map together.

"When you have the map on the wall everybody can gather around and analyze the situation together. It's teamwork."  
**—Glenn Martin, System Operator, San Francisco**



Distribution Supervisor John Herbner and System Operator Terre Wortman consult the map together in response to a report of a "dig-in" involving PG&E underground conduit in the City of Gilroy.



Local 1245 System Operators (ABOVE) relax for a moment after preparing for negotiations with PG&E over the impact on employees of the company's consolidation plan. BELOW: Negotiating for the union are (right side of the table, from left) Scott Grundhofer, Dave Steves, Daryl Turner, Business Manager Tom ww, Business Rep. Bob Dean, Local 1245 President Mike Davis and Dave Montoya.

