The Role of the Union Leader/Steward

As a Union leader, you are Local 8’s representative in the workplace. To many of your co-workers, you are the Union, just as to many workers the supervisor is the organization. For many members, you may be their only contact with Local 8.

A Union Leader must be an organizer, an educator, a mobilizer, a sounding board, a communicator and a defender of the workers’ rights on the job.

What a Union Leader Needs to Know

KNOW THE CONTRACT
- What it says, what it means, how it works
- Where to find key provisions
- How to get Contracts into the hands of members
- How the Contract protects you and your co-workers
- Examine based on your experiences, be prepared to recommend changes

KNOW THE GRIEVANCE PROCESS
- Explore ways to settle problems without having to file a grievance
- Know the where to find the grievance process described in the Contract
- Follow the procedures carefully and be aware especially of timelines

KNOW THE EMPLOYER’S POLICIES/RULES
- Watch bulletin boards and other places notices are posted
- Read the organization’s newsletters, emails and other communications
- Have a current copy of the Employee and/or Employer Policies & Procedures
- Know about any statutory rules/regulations impacting your industry

KNOW YOUR CO-WORKERS
- Learn about their work and working conditions
- Know the various departments, job classifications and other details of the sites
- Keep an up-to-date email or phone list of co-workers to more easily mobilize
- Know your fellow Union Leaders (or potential) Leaders
KNOW LOCAL 8’S POLICIES/BY-LAWS
  ▪ Know Local 8’s Constitution and By-Laws
  ▪ Know Local 8’s policies that impact the Membership
  ▪ Know how the Union works

KNOW LOCAL 8’S PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES
  ▪ Where and when the Chapter Meetings and Assemblies takes place
  ▪ Read Local 8 Journal
  ▪ Check on the www.opeiu8.org website
  ▪ Learn about Local 8 Committees

KNOW WHAT’S GOING ON IN THE WORLD
  ▪ Subscribe to the Washington State Labor Councils Report (www.wslc.org and it’s free) to get daily updates from compiled labor-related stories from around the country.

What a Union Leader Needs to Do

☐ Attend Chapter Meetings and Assemblies to find out what’s happening and to participate in Union decisions.

☐ Distribute Union Updates and other Union information.

☐ Listen to what members have to say and follow-up on issues.

☐ Hold regular meetings, even if it’s just an informal brownbag get-together over lunch or coffee.

☐ Talk to everyone in your work area at least every few weeks to ensure you’re on top of the issues.

☐ If you see a violation of the Contract or an injustice in the workplace, act on it—don’t wait for someone to complain.

☐ Represent all members fairly. It’s not just the right thing to do, it’s the law.

☐ Communicate with your staff Union Representative when you need help and support.