

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 Membership Meeting 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 Union Meetings 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.