

November, 2007

RECRUITING

We are in a situation now where we can't keep up with demand for apprentices in construction and for new entrants in Exhibits & Displays (trade shows). At the same time, there is increasing demand for journeypersons with specialized skills such as equipment operators, swampers, and torch-cutters. And there is increasing demand for knowledge of scaffold erection, health and safety regulations – the list keeps increasing.

We have increased our intakes for Exhibits & Displays. But there are limitations. We have been training approximately 50 new entrants a year and can increase that to, say, 70 – while the demand is closer to 100. But even for those we train, the payoff is not immediate. The new trainees will get *some* work during the busy times of the year for trade shows. However, it takes time before workers in Exhibits & Displays get from the B List to the A List, and once on the A List, it takes time before employment becomes consistent.

We have also moved up the schedule for Construction Craft Worker Basic classes. Construction apprentices have to be able to support themselves for eight weeks of full-time training, pay the union initiation and dispatch fees, and wait for one to three months before being dispatched. Ideally, we would like to schedule classes which will end when opportunities to go to work are good, for example in the spring. But, because of space and staffing limitations we can only run one class at a time and must have intakes in the winter. Apprentices completing Basic during the winter end up waiting. Then, come the spring, demand from employers will almost certainly outstrip supply.

Similarly, members upgrading their skills have to be able to invest their time, up to two weeks or even longer. In a perfect world we'd be able to offer this training to coincide periods of layoff. I have previously mentioned that we have, sometimes, three pages of signups for the Forklift/Zoom Boom/Bobcat course. But when we offer the training, we typically get a half dozen actually planning to attend, with that number cut in half by the day the course starts because of job calls.

All of the conditions for success in training that have been mentioned in previous Training Updates apply. We assess apprentices in reading and mathematics before we accept them. Often, members taking our upgrading courses have to drop out before completing because of difficulties with the material, or require additional time, or have to repeat the course.

And, to make sure community agencies, counselors, parents and others are clear – yes, we are recruiting, yes we need apprentices. However, the requirements for success remain. As has been repeatedly emphasized (for example, in the January, 2007 Update) in construction, apprentices have to be able to provide their own transportation. There is no purpose training individuals who are not going to be successful in getting employment.