



Lompoc City Council Agenda Item

City Council Meeting Date: August 5, 2014

TO: Patrick Wiemiller, City Administrator

FROM: Marty Hostler, P.E., Electric Utility Manager
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SUBJECT: Standards of Apprenticeship for Electrical Line Workers; Adoption of Resolution No. 5938(14)

Recommendation:

Staff recommends the City Council adopt Resolution No. 5938(14) (attached), approving Standards of Apprenticeship for Electrical Line Workers (Apprenticeship Program).

Background:

The Electric Division (Division), Human Resources, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 1245 jointly developed the attached Apprenticeship Program to be registered with the United States Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship (DOL).

The Apprenticeship Program is a well-designed 7,200 hour on-the-job training, textbook, and Northwest Lineman's College (NLC) on-campus training program. Apprentice Electrical Line Workers (ELWs) enrolled in the Program will become skilled at overhead distribution line and underground cable installation, repair, maintenance, and troubleshooting. NLC will conduct a series of simulated physical field proficiency tests and written exams to assess progress of Apprentice ELWs and determine if advancement to the next level is warranted.

Discussion:

Investing in the Apprenticeship Program shows our commitment to customer service, our ELWs, and the future success of the Division. The Apprenticeship Program will assist the Division in recruiting new Apprentice ELWs, our succession planning endeavors, and help us meet the City's Charter of Excellence by providing well-trained ELWs capable of meeting the future needs of our customers.

Recruiting

The Apprenticeship Program will enhance future recruitment endeavors. The most talented career-minded Apprentice ELWs, who we want to attract, prefer to work for utility companies that have structured apprenticeship programs, established standards for wage progression, and clear criteria for advancement. The Apprenticeship Program provides all of these key elements. New Apprentice ELWs will be given credit for already having graduated from an NLC or equivalent training program; they will also receive credit for any experience they have had with other utility companies that have registered programs.

One Division goal is to have Apprentice ELWs complete the Apprenticeship Program within three to four years. All future Apprentice ELWs will be required to participate in the Apprenticeship Program, which includes set training curriculum and wage progression based on standardized proficiency testing. Division goals require well-trained ELWs to afford the flexibility to assign less staff to projects while meeting OSHA requirements; thus increasing our efficiency and productivity.

Succession Planning

The Division is competing for an ever decreasing ELW labor pool. Nationwide the electric utility industry is facing an era of losing experienced ELWs to retirement; thus all electric companies are faced with losing key institutional knowledge. The most talented apprentices are attracted to other utility companies offering higher wages and well-designed standardized training programs.

The table provided below shows Division retirements over the past five years as well as projected retirements through 2020. Due to the aging workforce, six qualified ELWs have retired within the past five years. A significant amount of knowledge and experience has already been lost. Six more qualified ELWs are projected to retire by 2020. Consequently, we can expect additional knowledge and experience to be lost; we need to prepare now.

Recent and Projected Electric Division Retirements (Past Five Years up to 2020)

<u>Recent Retirements (past five years)</u>		<u>Projected Retirements (up to 2020)</u>	
<u>Year</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Position</u>
2009	Electric Supervisor	2015	Line Worker
2009	Division Manager	2015	Estimator
2009	Assistant Manager	2016	Lead Line Worker
2010	Lead Line Worker	2016	Line Worker
2012	Line Worker	2017	Line Worker
2012	Electric Supervisor	2018	Line Worker
2013	Line Worker	2019	Electric Supervisor
2014	Substation Supervisor	2020	Division Manager
Total =	8 (six-Qualified Line Workers)	Total =	8 (six-Qualified Line Workers)

Retirement of key personnel will result in increased recruiting costs and training, reduced productivity, and drain of intellectual capital. The loss of ELWs nationwide and in the Division has widened the talent gap. We need to champion a proactive initiative to replace retiring ELWs and transfer key knowledge and job skills to newer ELWs.

Charter of Excellence

The Division is committed to the City’s Charter of Excellence, “The City of Lompoc is dedicated to providing the best service to the citizens of Lompoc.” Customer service, efficiency, and reliable electric service are Division and City Council goals. The City’s Charter of Excellence lists several guarantees to demonstrate the level of commitment the City is resolved to provide, namely: “we will seek innovative ways to overcome barriers to efficiency, productivity, and achieve mutually agreeable outcomes;” and “we will train staff to provide quality customer service and accomplish professional objectives.” The Apprenticeship Program will help the Division satisfy these goals. If we want excellence, then we need to provide an excellent structured training program.

Fiscal Impact:

Division training costs are not expected to increase and are expected to remain at current funding levels through 2020 so the Division can continue training two to three Apprentice ELWs per year to replace retiring ELWs.

Conclusion:

Staff recommends adoption of City Council Resolution No. 5938(14) (attached) approving Standards of Apprenticeship for Electrical Line Workers.

Respectfully submitted,

Marty Hostler, P.E., Electric Utility Manager

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL TO THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR:

Larry A. Bean, P.E., Utilities Director

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL TO THE CITY COUNCIL:

Patrick Wiemiller, City Administrator

Attachment: [Resolution No. 5938\(14\)](#)