



**LOCAL 2-21**

1201 Sheridan Road  
Escanaba, MI 49829

Phone: (906)786-1846  
Fax: (906)233-9250

# 21 NEWS

Editor: Steve Benoit

[WWW.USW2-21.COM](http://WWW.USW2-21.COM)

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Contact Editor at: [beno7021@yahoo.com](mailto:beno7021@yahoo.com) or 906-399-4195

21 News is a periodic publication of USW (United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union) Local 2-21, 1201 Sheridan Road, Escanaba, Michigan 49829. The views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily that of the International Union, the Local 2-21 membership, or the officers of these bodies. The editor reserves the right to refuse any article that is detrimental to the Local Union or the USW. Article accuracy and content is the responsibility of the author.

## Important Information & Events

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)  
([www.guidanceresources.com](http://www.guidanceresources.com))  
1-800-428-4650

### Retiree "Get Together"

First Wed. of each Month 10 am at the Union Hall

**Union Meeting:** May 13, 7pm - Dinner at 6pm

**Next Generation Meeting:** May 13, 5pm Union Hall

**Steward's Meeting:** April 22 -3:00pm

**Welfare Club Meeting:** Monday, May 4 at 7:00pm Mead Rod and Gun Club

**Total Benefit Solutions** will be at the Union hall Wednesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> from 10:00am to 4:00pm for Union Benefit questions and to help "soon to be retirees" investigate the insurance market place and answer questions on the union insurance. Call 1-877-265-2212 to set up an appointment.

**Workers Memorial Day Vigil:** April 28<sup>th</sup> 6:30 pm USW Hall

**Mill/Union Picnic:** Save the date the mill picnic will be held Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup> at the UP State Fairgrounds. Camping available. Watch for more information on the day's plans.

## Committee Members

	Home	Work	Cell
President Ken Curtis .....			241-8417
1st Vice Chuck Way.....		233-2705	280-1698
2nd Vice Joe Curran .....		233-2511	420-3918
3rd Vice John Dubord .....		233-2782	280-1044
Insurance Steve Benoit.....	233-7126	233-2366	399-4195
Comp Mike Nantelle.....	786-9039	233-2655	399-0466
Secretary Brandon Stromberg.....		233-2714	284-1604
Treasurer Guy Trudell.....		233-2922	399-9143

Next Gen/Rapid Response.....Brandon Stromberg..233-2714 284-1604  
Hall Rentals .....Steve Kennedy . . . . . 789-1933



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[www.usw2-21.com](http://www.usw2-21.com)



<http://pacelocal21.proboards.com/>

## Committee Changes

info: Ken Curtis, President

This will be my last Newsletter article, as next May, we will all be meeting our new committee. And I would like my last article to be about the good things we have going for ourselves in Local 2-21. Our membership is down considerably, but our Members are outstanding. Since I have been fielding more than a few questions about our new committee, I thought this would be a good place to tell you about them. By now, most of you have heard who is going to be on the next committee. As of this writing, there is still an election to be held for 3rd Vice President, but by the time you read this, that will have been settled, and I'm sure that either of the two candidates will be strong representation for you. I have had the opportunity to work with both of them, and I feel that they are both very committed to this membership. I would like to take some time to talk about the two "new faces" on the committee that did not have to run against anyone, Ross Strand and Gerry Kell. I have known Ross since high school, and have nothing but respect for him. Ross has helped me more than once with grievance's from his area, and I learned that Ross is always prepared and informed. In fact, Bryon Branstrom once told me that if Ross is telling you something, you had better listen, because he's probably right. I am one hundred percent sure that Ross is going to bring it all to the table every time. I am very happy that he will be on the committee.

I first met Gerry Kell about two years ago, while working on a grievance in his area, and honestly, my first thought after speaking to him was that the local needed him on the committee. He had been on the executive board for his local at Boss Snowplow, and it was obvious from the get go that he would be an asset for us. In fact, he handled his grievance with HR all the way through, and we just sat back and watched. He was successful that day not only for

himself but two other gentlemen, and handled it quietly with facts and common sense. I remember telling him that I and the rest of the committee hoped he would someday consider running for a position, and he said he might. So you can understand how happy we are that he will be at the table.

Of course, those that will be staying have proven themselves time and again as well.

Joe Curran has an incredible understanding of the contract. And a passion for this local that is unrivaled. He never gives up, ever. Believe me, I know. More than one of my gray hairs has his name on them. It has been a real pleasure working with Joe. We are all fortunate to have him.

Chuck Way has been an incredible source of history for our committee, many times he has pointed out when history is repeating itself, and given the date and time in case I needed to look it up. That is just one of his many attributes, but I cannot stress it enough. This committee will be heavy with members who, like me, have less than 10 years in the mill. They will need Chuck (and now Ross) to point out pitfalls from the past. A resource like Chuck is a huge asset, and I don't mean to leave out the many other talents he posses, I just think it should be a highlight. And looking like Gandalf from the Hobbit kind of adds to the mystique as well, don't you think?

Brandon Stromberg has more energy than just about anyone I know. His commitment to this local has extended well past the hall and into the community with other locals, trade federations, and politicians. It has been a real pleasure to watch him take Rapid Response to the next level. I have met more political figures and activists since Brandon started than I care to think about. Brandon is always looking to help out and educate not just our members, but our community as well. You can't overstate the importance of that.

Guy Trudell continues to be a rock not just for our local, but others as well, helping them with "the books" and keeping them current through education and seminars. I remember once asking each committee member to make a list of what they do, so I could get a better feel for what goes on that I may not know about or just plain take for granted. After reading Guy's list, I felt like my asking for a list must have added a day to his month. It was that long. What Guy does for our local, the mechanics of it, is mind bending. We are very, very fortunate to have him.

And finally, Steve Benoit, our next President. It would be hard to find the words to do his commitment to this local justice. Steve has always picked up the ball and ran with it farther than anyone expected him too. Look at the message board and try to count the number of updates on any number of subjects that have Steve's name on them. Look at what Steve has accomplished with the Insurance position. Talk to the families of our members he's helped. Look at the work he has done in Safety here at the mill. What I write here can't do any of that justice. He has a list of accomplishments that speak for themselves, and I am sure that list will continue to grow. Steve is the right man for the job and I look forward to watching him run this local.

Thinking about your retirement plans?  
Or rethinking your current plan?

Let's talk.



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## Reaching Out on Elevated Temps

info: Chuck Way, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

Recently I had the pleasure of talking with a gentlemen who works in the deep south. This conversation was initiated because of our new Safety and Health Policy that looks like it will be adopted. The concerns were about working in elevated temperatures. We ended up talking about ways to cope in paper mills with high heat and humidity. He explained to me that they had many heat related illnesses and they said enough is enough. They instituted a series of measures to handle the heat and humidity problems. The measures included making sure the air makeup units were working properly, providing cool water and electrolytes via industrial coolers, making sure there was adequate break time no matter if the job ended up lasting a



little longer, recognizing not only your body's ability to handle heat and humidity but others as well, and providing adequate cooling vests on the floor. All in all they had a plan and put it into action. There is quite a bit of commitment from the company in their Mill and the employees as well, we are moving fast into the hotter part of our year so we are hoping that these steps can be incorporated into the Escanaba mill to help us avoid any heat related incidents.

## Bark Hauling

info: Joe Curran, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

Last week we had a meeting with HR regarding the current bark hauling situation in the Woodyard; during this meaning there was a lot of discussion about keeping this work in house and the potential timeframe we are looking at for some kind of fix for this process. The agreement we did come up with is the after exhausting the Woodyard, scheduling will ask the folks in Woodwaste & coal. They were chosen for two reasons; first because the bark is brought up to their pad and also because their schedule reflexes that of the Woodyard which creates clear cut line on who can work and who can't on a given day. The Union has also agreed to look at some alternative procedures to be able to utilize more Woodyard personal regarding possible move-ups to operate front end loaders. I will be contacting the areas Stewards regarding this topic.

We realize that this isn't the perfect plan, but it is a start and allows us to have more options to keep contractors off of the mill site and that is the ultimate goal; I ask that you please keep in mind that we are protecting our work. Also, we discussed the possibility of adding jobs in the future but that is extremely preliminary at this point. Finally, there is supposedly an engineering firm coming to the mill this week (week of March 30<sup>th</sup>) to look at among other things the bark situation; I will report out on that when I know more about the results of that visit.

a stronger local because of your guidance and leadership. Many hours have been and still will be volunteered for workers rights, supporting the community and defending our local contract. These things and many more cannot be measured and I want to personally say Thank You and keep your phone on!

## Safety Rule Changes

info: Steve Benoit, Insurance Advocate

You have all heard of the planned changes coming down the line to the Escanaba Safety Rules Policy proposed by management and the discussions that have been happening between the union and management to work toward an understanding of the changes. The Union Safety Committee has brought to the table the concerns that the membership has spoke to on the change to the Personal Attire part of the policy. The proposed change would be to eliminate shorts and cutoff sleeves in all areas of the mill. The Union Safety Committee brought to the table the concern about heat stress issues within the mill if changes are not made before the policy changes are implemented. The Committee wants to see all Air Make up Units, exhaust fans looked at and evaluated to what it would take to fix them. They want to see more locations for water, Squincher, cooling vests, etc. The need for a great Heat Stress Program that must be put in place with management providing face to face training along with education and acceptance of taking breaks in high heat temps. The group has a commitment that thermometers with temp and humidity readings will be made available to all areas of the mill along with portable thermometers for maintenance.

There are a number of things that need to be put in place before a change to the clothing policy can be made and management is in agreement with this. Union and Management have been meeting with a group to address all these issues and what can be done to make this happen. Management has a date set for the changes to take place which is the end of April (going into the down and thereafter) but we will see what is accomplished before this time. If you know of things that are lacking in your area such as working AMUs, exhaust fans, cooling vests, water and/or squincher please contact an area safety advisor or call the USAT office at 2366 to share your concerns.



## Service

info: Joe Curran, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

I would like to thank Ken Curtis, Karen Maggert and Mike Nantelle for their service to our local as well with those who

have been on the committee in the past. We are truly





## USW EHS CONFERENCE 2015

info: Tim Berthaume, E1 Safety Advisor

I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight the USW Environmental, Health & Safety Conference that was held in Pittsburgh the week of March 9<sup>th</sup>, and what I took away from it.

Pam Lauscher, Chuck Way, Tracy Rajala and I were the mill's/union's representatives this year. The intent of the symposium was to confer with other safety employees (both hourly & salaried), learn best practices, share success stories, and forge ties with others in industry that have the knowledge base to help us mitigate some of the intractable safety and health problems that we encounter every day. In that I feel we succeeded.

Each day started with a plenary session that involved speakers from governmental organizations and unions including MSHA, OSHA, USW and the CWA (Communication Workers Association). Afternoons were devoted to workshops which were the "meat & potatoes" of the conference. Between the four of us, I would say we attended 20 or more different sessions. Workshops I participated in include: "Working in Temperature Extremes", "Toxicology", "Occupational Health: Understanding Occupational Disease and Workplace Cancer", "Case Studies from OSHA-Investigated Fatalities" and others. Some were superior in content to others but in each case I felt I learned something that can be applied to the Escanaba Mill making it time and money well spent.

We heard from many people during the week, in multiple industries, including paper, steel-working, communications, rubber, light-manufacturing, glassmaking and the service sector. Almost all of them--to a person---reported long hours working past your regular shift (including working days off), maintenance being neglected (run to failure), production at the expense of safety and overall infrastructure neglect. That was an eye-opener. Apparently this new American business paradigm is not limited to the paper sector. Never before has the need for Union-based safety programs backed by management been more evident. In closing I wanted to say this was money well-spent by the Union and management. If you have any questions about our experience in Pittsburgh feel free to contact me or any of the others who attended.

## USW Environmental Health & Safety Conference 2015

info: Tracy Rajala, E3/RWS Safety Advisor

Being a safety advisor I wanted to share my recent experience in attending the USW EHS Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania earlier this month.

First a brief explanation of the conference; as Tim Berthaume described well in his assessment, each day started with a plenary session (a group of expert speakers from various governmental groups and unions). One of the highlights in these sessions was USW International President Leo Gerard along with Mike Wright, the Director of Health, Safety, and Environment Department, who both spoke passionately about past and current struggles fought and victories won in both worker's rights and human rights violation cases. After the morning sessions we would break for lunch and then return to specialized, focused workshops or classes for the remainder of the afternoon.

The total attendance for the conference grows every year with this year coming in at approximately 1600 attendees. One of my favorite parts about the conference is the interaction and communication with people from other industries and our own. One of the better workshops I attended was *Effective Health and Safety Committees—the Canadian Experience*. The presenter informed the group that in Canada there is a law that says if a worker refuses to do a job because of an unsafe condition the employer **must** notify any other worker who is asked to do that job of the previous refusal and the reason for refusal. Some other workshops I attended included *Working in Temperature Extremes*, (relevant to suggested safety policy changes) *Rev-up your Ergonomics Program*, (you'll be hearing more about this one in the near future RWS), and *Machine Guarding Safety*.

We were told that Georgia Pacific has had 6 confirmed fatalities & (2 unconfirmed fatalities) in a period of just a little over a year. I learned that a Goodyear tire plant in Fayetteville, N.C. has a room in which every person that has ever worked in it has developed Cancer. Some of the glassmakers talked about working in such extreme temperature environments that break periods are mandatory every 15 minutes.

It may be hard for some people to believe but in many ways we are light years ahead of many of these other companies with what we do to promote safety and yet there is still so much we can do better. To me that's what the conference is really about, trying to identify and apply ways in which we can improve overall safety in our mill.



## Political Eye

info: Brandon Stromberg, Rapid Response/Next Gen Coordinator

Recently, we hosted a legislative conference at our union hall. State

legislators Ed McBroom, John Kivela, and Tom Casperson attended the event along with numerous labor leaders from across the Upper Peninsula. Scott Dianda had to cancel due to a family illness. We discussed a wide array of issues; some related to labor, others related to all tax-payers.

On May 5, 2015, we will have the pleasure to vote on proposal one. Proposal one will raise the sales tax from 6% to 7%, increase the cost of gasoline, and certain vehicle registrations. Most of the money raised will go to fix and maintain roads and bridges. Money will also go to public schools, local

governments, public transit, and an increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit. Don't expect quick fixes though. If proposal one passes, the money will also be used to pay off our \$1.3 billion infrastructure debt that is already accumulated. The three legislators agree with this proposal, but Scott Dianda has publically opposed this proposal saying he thinks the state legislators should find a solution, not the taxpayers.



WE Energies and Cliffs Natural Resources reached a short-term energy agreement. John Kivela and Tom Casperson have been working on multiple bills to give the Upper Peninsula energy independence from Wisconsin. They think the U.P. should be linked with the rest of Michigan. Some projects will need to be completed for this to happen.

Marquette, MI has been fighting a tax loophole that allows new big box stores (Walmart, Lowes, Target, etc.) to use "comparable tax-rates" of old closed down stores. For example, a new box store can open in Marquette, MI and get the same tax-rate as a box store that closed down eight years ago in Flint, MI. Menards in Escanaba is trying to use the same tactic. John Kivela and Tom Casperson said they have been fighting this tax loop hole for two years and are optimistic about stopping it.

We had a discussion about the closure of the Manistique Paper mill. Our legislators investigated and discovered that, with the current investors, this mill would not remain open. John Kivela is optimistic about their mill's future. He said a local investor is interested. Time will tell.

The white-nose bat disease is killing large amounts of long eared bats. There is no cure for the fungus. There is talk of limiting logging to certain months of the year to try to stop the spread of the disease even though there is no significant evidence this will work. This is a federal issue, but our state legislators know this would impact our industry. Our USW legislative team in Washington D.C. has been informed and they are working on this issue to protect our jobs.

Some other topics we discussed were: the US steel industry, Michigan's budget plan, and prevailing wage. The US steel industry is cutting hundreds of jobs across the country due to the dumping of foreign steel. The US military is buying certain foreign steel products for our soldiers while this is happening. It was stated that Michigan's annual general budget, of \$10 billion, has not changed since the late 1990s. All the legislators were against changes to the prevailing wage law in our state, except Ed McBroom.

At times, the information we received from our legislators was misleading. Our union did a great job of holding them accountable to the facts. Our union is committed to serve, committed to defend, and committed to fight for YOU!

## UNION SUPPORT IN A TIME OF NEED



info: Steve Benoit, Insurance Advocate

When a family experiences the lost of a loved one the last thing that they want to be worrying about is where they may have a meal or gathering after a memorial service. Not all people have religious organizations that they can turn to in this time of need. Your local has decided to step up and offer their assistance in this time when our members should be spending time with family and remembering their loved one.

How this will work; if a present/past member or an immediate family member (spouse/partner, son, daughter) pass away and there is a need for a gathering area the union will provide the hall at no

charge, along with a meat/cheese tray and buns. We will contact union members to provide a dish and provide people to help with the meal and clean up of the hall. In the event that you are in need of this service provided by the local please call Steve/Kristy Benoit at 233-7126 or 399-4195.

## Union Retiree Insurance:

info: Steve Benoit, Insurance Advocate

Are you ready to pay over \$1,500.00 for you and your spouse to have health insurance when you retire after December 31, 2017?

This cost is becoming a reality especially with the retiree health care coverage from the mill going away on the above date!

As the union begins looking into a Union Retiree Insurance Plan for its members and retirees for the future we need each of you to look at your future and decided if this union benefit would be something that would benefit you and if you would be interested in it? If this is something that interests you please contact me at the mill (233-2366) or my cell (399-4195). We need to have large numbers to provide to insurance companies when we try to show them the benefit of selling insurance to our group. I look forward to hearing from not only active members but from also our retirees that are also interested in this insurance. Remember we have strength in numbers.



## Financial Myths, Mistakes, and Misunderstandings

info: Larry Hathaway, Senior Investment Representative with UPSB Financial Services

Throughout our financial lives, we may be influenced by myths, mistakes, and

misunderstandings (MMMs). Here are just a few.

### In the beginning . . .

**"I don't invest because I don't know much about it."** It's time to learn, because a basic understanding of investing concepts can help you make more informed financial decisions.

**"Wow, they'll give me that much credit! I must be able to handle it."** Just because the credit-card company or bank extends a large amount of credit to you, it doesn't mean you should use all of it. The more you borrow, the larger the monthly payments, and before you know it, you've bitten off more than you can chew. Figure out how much you'll owe based on the amount you borrow and determine if it will fit within your budget. Generally speaking, if you can't afford the payment, don't incur the debt.

**"I'm young. I'll worry about retirement when I'm older."** Planning for retirement involves saving enough by a desired age to enable you to support yourself without having to work. If you wait to begin saving for retirement, you'll have to sock more away or put off retirement to a later date. So the earlier you begin saving, the better.

### Go figure

Sometimes we think we know something and rely on it as being correct, when in fact it couldn't be further from the truth.

**"I know my finances like the back of my hand. I don't need to write them down."** You'd be surprised how often we think we know how much we can afford until our bills start to exceed our income. If you write down your expenses and income (e.g., create a spending plan or budget), you'll know how much you can spend.

**"I'll dip into my retirement account and make it up later."**

First, if you borrow from your 401(k), you'll likely pay fees and interest. If you take money from a traditional IRA, you'll pay income tax on the amount you take and possibly a 10% penalty. Remember, these accounts are intended for retirement. Taking money out now increases the risk you might run out of money during retirement.

**"My child will pay back the money I loaned to him or her."**

Good luck. That "loan" is probably going to turn into a gift, which isn't necessarily a bad thing if it really helps your child, but be sure you can afford the loan/gift before making it.

### And later on . . .

As we get older, we may fall prey to some MMMs that can be the source of needless angst, such as:

**"I won't need as much income in retirement."** Maybe, but it might be a mistake to count on it. In fact, in the early years of retirement, you may find that you spend just as much money, or maybe more, than when you were working, especially if you are still paying a mortgage. And don't forget to factor in increasing health-care costs.

And speaking of health care, **"the new health-care law cuts my basic Medicare benefits and services."** Just the opposite is true. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) mandates that no guaranteed Medicare benefits are cut. In fact, the ACA expands Medicare benefits to include a free annual wellness assessment.

And finally, **"If I die without a will, the state will get my assets and property."** This isn't necessarily true. Each state has intestacy laws, which determine who gets what when someone dies without a will. But those laws generally deal with assets in your name at your death that don't have a designated beneficiary or joint owner. In any case, if you want to have some say in who will inherit your assets after your death, you need to prepare an estate plan, which probably includes a will.

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# Retirement Insurance Trust Fund

Created by the members of USW 2-21, IBEW 979 and Teamsters 486



## 2014

### ANNUAL REPORT

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>TOTAL RIF INCOME</b>	<b>BENEFIT CAP (75% of PYTI)</b>	<b>BENEFITS PAID OUT</b>
2004	\$425,709	\$312,327	\$301,030
2005	\$439,757	\$319,282	\$174,470
2006	\$464,966	\$329,818	\$223,319
2007	\$498,098	\$348,724	\$236,931
2008	\$496,446	\$373,573	\$251,790
2009	\$475,398	\$372,334	\$260,486
2010	\$496,060	\$356,548	\$273,880
2011	\$506,493	\$372,045	\$322,780
2012	\$521,432	\$379,870	\$330,234
2013	\$518,270	\$391,074	\$343,215
2014	\$561,707	\$388,703	\$383,938

Note: A seven-year benefit limit became effective Jan 1, 2005.  
Total RIF Income = All contributions, interest, and dividends  
Benefit Cap = 75% of the Previous Year's Total Income

As of 12/31/2014, plan assets totaled \$5,132,232. There were 357 eligible retirees, 298 of which were drawing monthly RIF benefits. There are approximately 774 active hourly employees who also have some claim to the plan assets having paid into the retirement insurance trust fund.

The board of trustees consists of Chairman, Sean Reese from Teamsters Local 486, trustee Brian Lesnieski of USW Local 2-21, trustee William Anderson of USW Local 2-21, trustee Melvin Anderson of IBEW Local 979, and retiree trustee Joyce Rabbitoy, formerly of Teamsters Local 486.

Assets are invested in stocks, bonds, and other funds through Wells Fargo Investment Services. Timothy Lehto and Peter Munson of Wells Fargo are the fund's portfolio managers. Accuserve is the plan administrator distributing benefits, accepting applications, and handling customer concerns. Accuserve can be contacted at 906-428-2861 or by writing to Accuserve, PO Box 101, Gladstone, MI 49837.