



## ***WHAT IS A SHOP STEWARD?***

A union Shop Steward is probably the most recognizable and one of the most important positions within the labour movement. An IBEW Local 37 Shop Steward is a vital link between the members, the union and management. To many members, their relationship with the steward will have significant influence on their view of the IBEW.

Through their actions, attitude, and approach, the steward will be the IBEW that members remember. Therefore, it's critical that the image and reputation put forward by the steward is one worthy of their trust, confidence, and respect.

Local 37 Shop Stewards are appointed by the Business Manager to serve as a "front line" representative of the union. In accepting this position, the steward assumes a leadership role in their workplace and will also become an ambassador of Local 37 who sparks the enthusiasm of their fellow members and helps to develop their sense of team spirit and belonging.

Our members will most often turn to a shop steward when seeking advice. In order for their opinions to be valued, the steward must be familiar with several documents including: the IBEW Constitution, Local 37 Bylaws, their collective agreement, workplace policies and practices, and any relevant legislation. Above all, the steward must be a fair and objective advocate for all members in their workplace.

## ***QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE STEWARD***

An effective steward is someone who is:

- Able to resolve conflict and be recognized as a good problem solver;
- Seen as an honest and credible person with high integrity;
- Assertive (not aggressive) and decisive with the ability to deliver difficult (even if unpopular) news;
- Recognized and respected for possessing a strong work ethic and excellent job skills;
- Committed to the principles of justice, equality, security, fairness, and democracy;
- Compassionate and is able to develop a rapport with the member;
- Able to make members feel comfortable and provide them with supportive encouragement;
- A good communicator with the ability and willingness to give undivided attention;
- Thorough and well organized;
- Positive, motivated, enthusiastic, and an energized supporter (and promoter) of IBEW Local 37.

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS:**

As a shop steward, key responsibilities include:

- Supporting and cooperating with the Business Manager and his appointees and never working in conflict with them;
- Building solidarity and promoting harmonious relationships among the members and discourage factional bickering in the workplace;
- Getting to know the IBEW and Local 37 including understanding the history, structure, mission and role within the labour community;
- Ensuring that all members are abiding by the rules set forth in the IBEW Constitution and Local Union 37 bylaws;
- Ensuring that the employer is satisfying the obligations defined by the collective agreement and/or any applicable legislation;
- Attending and actively participate in union meetings;
- Encouraging members to attend meetings and (when asked) offer a brief report on the issues discussed;
- Reporting the successes and challenges faced;
- Defending the union from harmful rumours;
- Promoting and maintaining a positive, professional, and proactive relationship within the union and between Local 37 and management;
- Investigating and responding to members' concerns in a timely fashion;
- Gathering necessary research materials to support negotiating committee;
- Learning from fellow members by asking for advice when their knowledge, strengths, and experiences may help;
- Maintaining open lines of communication with other stewards, union officers, members, and the union office;
- Performing other duties as assigned by the union or as required by the IBEW Constitution and/or Local 37 Bylaws.

## **UNION EXPECTATIONS:**

Fellow members expect stewards to:

- Attend training sessions offered by the Local 37
- Promote union building activities such as: welcoming new members, recruiting volunteers to become actively involved in union affairs or, exploring opportunities for increased membership participation

The union has empowered shop stewards to serve as a protector of the rights of our members. Standing in solidarity with the IBEW, stewards will help the union succeed in its efforts to enrich the lives of members.

A shop steward is the backbone of the labour movement and the spearhead of every battle.