



1201 Sheridan Road
Escanaba, MI 49829

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

21 NEWS

Editor: Gerald Kell WWW.USW2-21.COM August, 2015
Contact Editor at: djgribble@gmail.com or 906-869-7943

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 (800) 428-4650

Retiree Get Together

First Wed. of each Month 10 am at the Union Hall
Union Meeting: August 12th - 7 pm - Dinner at 6 pm
Next Generation Meeting: August 12th - 5 pm at the Union Hall
Steward's Meeting: August 26th - 3 pm at the Union Hall
Welfare Club Meeting: Monday, August 6th - 7 pm at the Mead Rod & Gun Club
Total Benefit Solutions will be at the Union hall Wednesday, August 12th from 10 am until 4 pm for Union benefit questions and to help impending retirees investigate the insurance marketplace.
Call 1-877-265-2212 to schedule an appointment.



Committee Members

Work	Cell		
President	Steve Benoit	233-2366	399-4195
1st Vice	Chuck Way.....	233-2705	280-1698
2nd Vice	Joe Curran	233-2511	420-3918
3rd Vice	Jeff Skorupski.....	233-2556	399-5472
Insurance	Gerald Kell.....	233-3062	869-7943
Comp	Ross Strand.....	233-2549	280-1494
Secretary	Brandon Stromberg.....	233-2714	284-1604
Treasurer	Guy Trudell.....	233-2922	399-9143
Next Gen/Rapid Response..	Brandon Stromberg.....	233-2714	284-1604
Rapid Response.....	Gerald Kell.....	233-3062	869-7943
Hall Rentals	Steve Kennedy		789-1933



www.pacelocal21.proboards.com



www.facebook.com/USWlocal21

Core Values and Principles?

Steve Benoit, President

We the members of USW Local 2-21 believe in a number of ideals, one being that we are a union comprised of a workforce that possesses a strong work ethic and will go above and beyond to get the job done. We believe the assets here in Escanaba are worthy of a fight and we are a large part of those assets. In the past years we have continually heard that our industry is declining, we are well aware of this undeniable truth. We have also heard that we need to work together to pull ahead in this volatile industry and thus far, we have certainly tried to work together with the Company. I would like to offer up the following explanations employing the Verso Principles to show some of the road blocks into which we are running.

Safe from the Start

Personally, I believe a "Safe from the Start" principle works for all involved: the Union and the Company. When policy changes are made, every aspect needs to be looked at especially in regards to safety. Recently, nineteen of our management personnel were let go with no communication to the floor about a plan going forward. This lack of forethought is still causing confusion leading to people being distracted. In Roll Shipping all four of the working foremen were let go only to be replaced with E1 foremen that have no experience in the area. In E1, seasoned



foremen were replaced with untrained foremen that do not understand the Lockout/Tagout procedures completely and this is only one example of training these foremen are not receiving. We could go on and on about the "Safe from the Start" aspect but I think we all see these issues on a daily basis and could agree that

management is not holding up their end of the deal on “Safe from the Start” they are only “Safe after the Start” as they expect us to just deal with the ill-planned decisions they’ve made.

Accountability, Truth & Transparency

Working together is a two-way street. The Union Committee recently reiterated this point at the monthly Union/Management Meeting. We are expected to have accountability on the floor in our everyday work and if we do not do our job we can be prepared for discipline. At times we are expected to be accountable for things that the company is approaching incorrectly. An example of this being the recent claims--against employees by the Company--of “insubordination” resulting in a week suspension. Insubordination for either feeling physically ill or being injured at work?! Every one of us will take accountability for our actions but if a person is going home because they cannot do their job safely due to sickness and/or fatigue or because they have been injured, they should be commended, not reprimanded.

Being truthful and transparent has always been

explained to me as
“Doing what you say.”
We have repeatedly
been told one thing,
only to witness a
completely different



thing happen ever since the new management took over here in Escanaba. Examples include Crew Led Safety Plans, the impending smoking ban, and the change in our contractual clothing policy. When management told me they were not going to roll out the Crew Led Safety Plans until they had fully explained them to the Union I expect them to adhere to the “Truth” principle. This did not happen. When management stated that they agree designated smoking areas on-site are contractual and they are open to discussions about them, I would like to be able to take management for their word. We all know that management again, did not follow this either. I suppose I may just have a different definition of what truth and transparency.

Not only is accountability, truth and transparency an issue here at the local, but it seems that there is an issue at the corporate level as they unilaterally decided to suspend the payment of the 401(k) match. They did so without properly informing anyone at the local level. When asking HR if they were aware of this or if they could answer any of these questions they were not only unable to answer questions, they did not even know anything about

this 401(k) move until the day the email came out informing the rest of us. Transparent, no.....truthful, no.....accountable, I don't think so.

Engaged and Enthusiastic People

The only way you will have engaged and enthusiastic people is by welcoming them in and helping them understand changes, not making changes and then expecting everyone to be engaged and enthusiastic about changes they have no idea about. People are also engaged and enthusiastic when they do not feel threatened or feel they may lose their job because of accidents in a workplace that lacks people, that forces people to work unreasonable overtime and work in hazards that could be easily be eliminated.

Anticipate Change

As I wrote earlier, we understand that the paper industry is diminishing. With an industry that is being negatively impacted by current market conditions, we understand that there will be change and welcome progressive change that allows us to move ahead and be successful. What we will not welcome, however; is throwing away all the history that has made this mill successful. There's countless people that came before us who fought not only for our rights as workers but also for the operations of this mill to be successful. Unfortunately, several companies have come in here with their changes and stripped us down to a company that now has no woodlands, dams or parts to allow us to run as successful as we could be. These companies have ignored our infrastructure and the normal everyday maintenance of our machines only to line their pockets at the top. We anticipate change and welcome it; we just want to see changes that will make our mills successful, not just provide money to the people at the top while we struggle at the bottom. Together we can make everyone successful by working together and listening to people that have experience at this mill.

Nevertheless, I can certainly continue through each one of the Verso principles and demonstrate how they've had a hard time living up to these principles, but I believe it's pretty clear. A truly strong leader would consider following their own principles creating pride among their employees as opposed to the scare tactics they're currently using.

Your thoughts wanted here!
Do you have an article you'd like to submit
or a topic you'd like us
to cover? Contact the editor today!

401(k) Match Suspension

Steve Benoit, President

For anyone who hasn't heard, there was an e-mail sent out from the Company concerning their match to our 401(k) plans. The following is the letter we received. The Union Committee has started immediately addressing this issue. We know that it speaks to the Company contribution in the Master Agreement (Page 27 and Page 29). We have contacted District 2 Director Mike Bolton and District Rep Sally Feistal with questions concerning this letter and they have aggressively started dealing with it. We have also contacted a few of the financial advisers in town to ask if they can lend any help with this information. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact any of the Union Committee members for information. Below is the information that came about this week. For up to date information on this situation please go to the Union message board.

Please remember that now is the time to hold strong as a Union!

"Dear Colleagues,

We are all working very hard to make Verso a stronger, more successful company, and it shows. We are delivering meaningful cost reductions and performance improvement across the company. As we continue to gain traction on our many improvement initiatives, it's also very important that we maintain adequate liquidity as we strive to fully integrate the new organization.

We're meeting our financial obligations, including recently a large interest payment on our debt. But the fact is, we're facing some industry headwinds right now that we expect to last for a while longer. To help us through this rough patch, our senior leadership team is taking a number of proactive steps to conserve our available cash. We have assessed a wide variety of options and made every effort to identify actions that would not impose undue hardship on our employees.

One of the actions we've decided to take is the postponement of Verso's employer matching contributions to our employee 401(k) retirement savings plans. This is just a temporary delay of matching contributions to your 401(k) accounts, not a discontinuance of contributions. Once our immediate cash preservation needs have eased, the employer match to your 401(k) accounts will be made retroactively. In the meantime, the Verso employer matching contribution to your 401(k) accounts will continue to appear on your

paychecks, but the actual contributions will not be made until a later date.

When we became the new Verso, we knew there would be challenges ahead. Verso's senior leaders remain confident that our team is up to these challenges, and we appreciate all you do every day to keep Verso moving in the right direction. Thank you for your continuing efforts.

Sincerely,

Kenny D. Sawyer

Senior Vice President

Human Resources and Communications"

Update: the Local has responded to this action with a grievance filed on July 31st. The grievance language was written by a USW District 2 attorney and the language is as follows:

"By letter dated July 28, 2015, the Company informed the Union that it is postponing payment of employer matching contributions to the 401(k) plans until an unspecified "later date." The Company's unilateral decision to cease paying employer matching contributions each payroll period is in violation of provisions of the parties' agreements, including, but not limited to, Appendix E of the parties' Master Agreement and Article 29, Section 2 of the parties' Local Agreement. The Union demands that the Company immediately resume its contractual obligation to pay matching contributions to employees' 401(k) accounts each payroll period and immediately reimburse employees' 401(k) accounts with any matching contributions that have been unpaid as a result of the Company's breach."

Union Support in Time of Need

Steve Benoit, President

When a family experiences the loss of a loved one, the last thing they need to worry about is a proper location to 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) passes away and there is a need for a gathering area the Union will provide the Union

Hall at no charge, along with a meat/cheese tray and buns. We will also contact a list of volunteer Union members to provide a dish, help with the meal, and clean up the hall. In the event that you are in need of this service provided by the Local please call Steve/Kristy Benoit at 399-4195 or 399-7126.

*"The best of wages will not compensate for excessively long working hours which undermine health."
-Chief Justice Louis Brandeis*

Sweat the Big Stuff

Brandon Stromberg, Secretary/Next Gen/Rapid Response

As a proud father of 3 young children, I try not to let the little things bother me too much. Like the other morning I was changing my 4 month old son's diaper. I took off the dirty one, cleaned him up and started to put on the new one. Then he starts to pee. Before I can stop him, it goes on my arm, then my face, then his arms, and then his face. We look at each other for a moment; then, we both laugh. My 3 year old Brielle is getting big so fast. She wants to get dressed herself, brush her own teeth, and even get in her car seat herself. A few days ago she was playing outside and decided to pull down her pants and pee in the grass. I said, "Brielle, we're not camping, you have to use the bathroom inside." She looks at me, laughs and says, "I sowwy daddy." Peyton is 6 going on 16. She whispers to me, "Dad, Hannah told me babies come out of your private." I whisper to her, "Well, I know Hannah is not a gynecologist, but I thought babies fell from heaven. We better keep this between you and I and we will talk about this when you're a little older." "Dad, what's a gyno . . ." "I'll explain when you're older honey. When you're much older."

I love my family very much and like you, I'm fortunate to have a good job that helps me provide for them. But, just because I'm appreciative of my job doesn't mean I am happy about how our employer handles certain situations nor will I stand idly by while they circumvent our contract. Here are some interesting things that have happened at our mill since Verso purchased NewPage.

- *Our clothing policy has changed. The first weekend this was implemented, at least one person went to the ER for heat exhaustion*
- *Crew-led Safety Plans are rushed out without a clear plan*

- *They plan to make our mill "smoke free" this fall even though we have "designated smoking areas" negotiated in our contract*
- *Nineteen "layoffs" occur one day, and then we are hiring others just days later; no clear plan and nothing communicated to us.*
- *Over \$10,000 of corporate money is spent on food in one month at our mill, but they can't fix broken equipment?*
- *Most recently our negotiated 401(k) match is being temporarily stopped, but we will continue to see it on our checks even though we are not actually getting it.*

Furthermore, we are asked to participate in and support these changes! Let's look at some of Verso's core principles: safe from the start, accountability, truth, transparency, and anticipate change. It appears they prefer to say one thing and do another. It really bothers me when hardworking people are taken advantage of while not being treated fairly or with respect.

Recently, we attended a small get together in Crystal Falls to talk with some young AFCSME Union members. I'd like to give a big shout out to fellow USW 2-21 Local members Jason Hurkman and Jenna Skradski for joining me at this event. We shared our stories, talked about issues we're all facing, and encouraged each other to keep up the good fight. It went so well that they invited us to their annual Union dinner which a couple hundred of their members attend. It doesn't matter if a union represents 70 or 700 people, the strength of a union relies on the people involved. If any of the aforementioned issues bother you more than a baby urine attack, or an awkward conversation with a toddler, I strongly encourage you to become involved and stay educated. Let's all clap 3 times.



**601 Ludington Street
Escanaba, MI 49829**

Offering Compliant Individual Health Plans
Medicare Supplemental Plans
Advantage Plans
Part D Prescription Plans

**Call Adrienne St. Vincent or Dannelle Viau
906-786-2122**

RW&S Area Changes

Jeff Skorupski, 3rd Vice President

Hello all, just a little update on what's happening on my end. The Roll, Wrap & Shipping Department continues to struggle with the recent changes and added responsibilities. I asked for a small pay increase on behalf of the affected employees and was told we must go through the process for pay increases. I will submit the appropriate paperwork but am not optimistic about the outcome. There are a lot of changes going on right now and I have received a few phone calls about people having to do stuff they didn't do before (i.e. writing in tour report). Please be aware Verso is pursuing punishment at an extreme rate. We can always work things out after so do not get yourself in trouble over something minor. I am not going to write a novel like some people (Gerry, Steve). Therefore, in closing there are going to be a lot of rumors about Verso and possible changes coming, so with that being said, stay focused and safe while at work as soon as we learn information we will pass it along.

Local 2-21 Supplemental Insurance

Paul Baeten, TBS Insurance

2015 Open Enrollment Sept 2nd – 25th

Union Hall – September 2nd, 9th, 15th thru 18th from 10am to 7pm

USAT Office at the Mill – September 17th & 18th from 6am to 4pm

It's been a rough year for our brothers and sisters at the mill. We have lost some good friends and watched others struggle with debilitating traumas. With inherent, everyday hazards and crazy shifts, this is a tough and demanding line of work. Corporate benefits are continually decreasing and subsequently transferring more of the cost and responsibilities of our healthcare onto the individuals' shoulders. Fortunately, the Local has successfully supported a supplementary healthcare plan over the past several years that allows you, as a member, access to a relatively cheap insurance plan to help mitigate your costs and burdens in the case of illness and/or injury. I implore you to ask yourself a few simple questions when considering whether or not you're a good candidate for this coverage:

- *If something happens to you are you prepared?*
- *Whose responsibility is it to protect and provide for your family and yourself?*
- *How long can you live on \$350 per week?*

- *What steps have you taken to protect your family should something happen to you?*
- *Your children's education, athletics, college, social activities?*

USW Local 2-21 Voluntary Benefits have provided over \$740,000 in benefits to members in need since 2011. You work very hard to provide for your family, yourself, your lifestyle, and your retirement, it's important to protect that. If what you have is worth protecting, and you have not taken appropriate steps to do so, your Union Local has put a plan in play to help protect what's important. Please take 10 minutes and consider investing less than 2% of your paycheck to protect the other 98% of your income and your family's lifestyle. Come join the other 437 current Union members and enjoy the peace of mind this extra protection can provide. Remember, there is an inverse correlation between members who sign-up and the cost of coverage...the more people on the plan, the lower the cost.

"That darn fandangled Facetube!"

Gerald Kell, Insurance Advocate

In light of recent events, it's occurred to me that as a whole, the Union's ability to effectively communicate with its members is being adversely affected by a simple lack of effort on behalf of individuals. I'm fully aware that's probably not the polite way to put it, but it's an unfortunate truth. While I'll admit there is always room for improvement for those charged with getting information to the members, I'm still a little perplexed by the underwhelming amount of members who actually utilize the mediums already in place. Frankly, since you've made it this far into the newsletter, I commend you; you are clearly not in the category I allude to earlier in this paragraph and hopefully we will continue to successfully engage you in a manner that encourages further inquiry.

Nevertheless, with the recent announcement by the Company about the temporary suspension of our 401(k) contribution match, an opportunity to improve upon member involvement and subscription to our current streams of information arose. When statements of this magnitude are issued, it naturally creates a wildfire that sweeps

across the mill—and justifiably so. Unfortunately, the lines of communication that should be topical and steadfast instead typically resemble a plate of spaghetti inundated with metaphorical meatballs contributing to unnecessary confusion. Those who follow the Union’s Message Board or the USW 2-21 Facebook page received updates quickly and were able to respond with their concerns and comments. This interaction allows the Union Committee to properly address the situation and we were able to respond swiftly with the grievance.

We fully understand that not everyone we need to reach is tech-savvy and access to the Message Board or Facebook may not be a primary option; that’s why there will be a CAT letter sent out by the time this newsletter gets to you and articles here will also address the issues. However, with the overwhelming prominence of smartphones and expanding access to internet, there’s certainly no excuse for the astonishingly low percentage of employees currently utilizing these convenient options. A concerted effort to raise this awareness will create more effective methods of getting the information to each inquiring individual with greater speed and accuracy. Please take the opportunity to download a simple app or if you’re on Facebook already, start following the USW Local 2-21 page. These links and apps can be found on the flip side of the CAT letter. If like myself, you sometimes struggle with these technologies, I suggest you seek out the technical support team you may already have running around your home in the form of an adolescent and/or preteen who is probably painfully addicted to that fun little device that was once just a phone.

The Glory of Yesteryear

Ross Strand, Workers Comp Advocate

I hope this article finds everyone finding the time to enjoy summer and all is going well. I had an opportunity recently to sit and collect my thoughts and with all the punishments being handed down recently, it made me think back to better times. Back to the time when we were the #1 mill in North America. Back when all we did was make paper, top quality paper; we had happy customers, happy employees, all was relatively good. Instead of giving out reprimands, they were giving out gifts, meals, hunting knives, t-shirts, sweatshirts, and jackets for our hard work. I know the market has changed significantly, but the basic employer/employee practices certainly haven’t had

to. Hopefully Verso will realize this sooner rather than later. Remember to take care and work safe regardless of how things are going here at the mill, being put in harm’s way will only compound the problem.

What Not to Say....

Joe Curran, 2nd Vice President

When engaged in conversation with a salaried employee please keep in mind the following rights you possess:

If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my union representative, officer or steward be present at the meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions.

These are your Weingarten Rights and you need to, effective immediately, consider them anytime you talk to supervision. I am dead serious. It has become clear that even seemingly innocent discussions about problems on a machine, safety concerns, or your weekend plans—without a Union representative—may be used against you! Be wary, many of the supervisors are not your friend, even if they are friendly, they WILL use what they can against you when it’s convenient. This includes your frontline foreman, superintendents, or even a scheduler. This is not just an in-case scenario, we are seeing them do it in the mill and it can certainly happen to you. I understand you may feel that you have a good working relationship with them, but, it’s still a working environment where they will throw you under the bus to save their own hide.

As a reminder, if you have been asked to do something that you feel you haven’t received adequate training on, or it’s a newer process and involves things with which you’re unfamiliar, be sure to make a note of it and make your supervisor aware. Require them to make the judgment call



Larson Land Services LLC.
We move the earth for you

Bob Larson Sr.
Owner
cedarsap@hotmail.com

906-786-5525 906-420-2256
1128 Washington ave
Esanaba Mi. 49829

because if you screw it up, you may be slapped with a “lack of application” or worse. I don’t enjoy writing an article like this but if Verso is going to hold us over the fire it’s time to get smart and protect ourselves from the flames.

Don’t forget, this will all lead into our preparations for the 2017 contract negotiations! Stay or get informed and involved!

High Yield Return on Investment

Gerald Kell, Insurance Advocate

At a District 2 training conference I was invited to attend recently in Lansing—along with about twenty fellow USW members from throughout District 2—we were treated to a rapid and fruitful three days of education on various union topics. District Director Mike Bolton and District Representative Sally Feistal were also in attendance and contributed to the vast experience and wealth of knowledge that was ripe for the picking. We were briefed on everything from the long and storied history of the USW right on up to the many current initiatives being sought by our International representatives.

While sharing all the information would most likely render any reader of this article unconscious—if it hasn’t already—I believe one specific area we covered has the capacity to grab and keep the attention of any dues-paying member of our Local. What could that topic possibly be? Is it the internal workings of hard fought trade policy enforcement continuously being battled at an international level to protect the goods we manufacture from overseas corruption? Could it be the hierarchal structure of USW representation from shop steward all the way up to Leo Gerard? Would I dare venture into the political arena and finish this article off with a diatribe about Congressman and women who are currently part of a concerted effort to undermine our core values via partisan legislation that goes mostly unnoticed? Nope, none of those.....yet.

In this particular newsletter I want to focus on the information that is readily available to each member about where our dues are spent and the positive effects of these dollars. There was no shortage of pamphlets, stapled reports, and printed resources at our disposal during the training—something those of us in the paper industry certainly noticed and commended.

Although for the most part, I’ve always been fairly confident that my union dues were serving a

constructive purpose, it’s certainly natural to question them at times; and I’d honestly never taken an in depth look into the breakdown. Just like anything else, we can become complacent with some of the luxuries we’re afforded through our union efforts. I’ve even started noticing how many of us (including myself) refer to the Union as a sentient being separate from ourselves. Fortunately, that is not really the case. We ARE the Union. It may sound a bit cheesy, but, indeed it is the truth. Certainly an individualistic disagreement with what your union may be doing collectively is not rare, but overall the altruistic approach of a democratic system is definitely in place and functioning as well as we allow it. With the impending effects of Michigan’s Right to Work (for less) legislation looming, it’s certainly an appropriate time to remind everyone what dividends their investments are reaping. I chose to include a very informative breakdown of dues expenditures in this newsletter that is also available online at any time. So, without getting too in depth and risk redundancy, I did just want to point out a few aspects of the data I found compelling. Notice that the 1.45% that is collected is less than 75% of the 2% raise we recently received; arguably a raise we’d never see without an organized shop. Just that one raise negates this cost to you and I for the representation and benefits of union support. Consider the current 401(k) situation that would be an open and shut case if we were non-union employees; with those dues put to work, we were able to grieve the unilateral Company move within three days of its notice. Also, notice how much of the money stays here at the local level to support brothers and sisters that you work alongside or see each week. When considering the costly efforts at an international level to protect our rights, I found how much we keep local to be a pleasant surprise.

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

Let’s talk.



Les Cseter, CIFA
SVP—Trust Manager

FIRST BANK
INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP
Escanaba • 906-786-3335
lcseter@first-bank.com

Not FDIC insured • No bank guarantee • May lose value