



*Managing M<sup>c</sup>Cormick Place Complex and Navy Pier*

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## **MPEA and IBEW 134 Agree to Workforce Re-Organization**

### **Resident Electrician Pool Trimmed to Improve Customer Service**

CHICAGO - The Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (**MPEA**) today announced a reorganization of its resident workforce of electricians (**FOCUS One**) to further improve quality, efficiency and customer service on the exhibition floor. The reorganization reflects collaboration between MPEA and Local 134 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (**IBEW**).

After an extensive evaluation of the pool of in-house electricians called to work on conventions and trade shows on an "as-needed" basis, the MPEA will retain a core group of 50 electricians designated as foremen and floor supervisors.

The pool had been comprised of more than 150 electricians. The number fluctuated based on the number and size of shows. MPEA will work with IBEW Local 134 to supplement the new 50-member pool by bringing in new electricians from Local 134 on a case-by-case basis as show needs dictate. This will allow MPEA to choose from a broader talent pool within Local 134's jurisdiction to refresh its' workforce with new electricians who demonstrate exceptional skill and efficiency.

By implementing this process with a resident staff of 50 motivated and experienced foremen and floor supervisors, MPEA will improve the quality of work on the exhibition floors. MPEA officials say the move is in response to growing customer demands for fundamental changes that will translate into better customer service and lower costs. These demands must be met because competition for events has become even more intense due to factors influenced by the economy.

Recently, shows have decreased in size due to a number of factors. More businesses are curbing travel for shows and attendees are finding alternate means of sharing information and best practices. That means show organizers can consider smaller venues in cities that may have lower internal costs and per diem costs for attendees. As a consequence, there is greater focus on cost as a key metric in making decisions as to where to hold shows.

"The leadership of the MPEA recognizes how important it is to constantly look for ways to improve customer service and hold down exhibitors' costs. We have made tough decisions to enhance what Chicago has to offer and we are grateful for the ongoing cooperation we receive from the leadership of Local 134," said MPEA Board Chairman Theodore R. Tetzlaff.

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"The convention and trade show industry is a vital force in our regional economy," added Juan Ochoa, MPEA's Chief Executive Officer. "Thousands of jobs are at risk if we fail to act. We will do all that we can to preserve our status as a premier convention center."

The workforce reorganization would not have been possible without agreement from the IBEW Local 134 leadership. "We understand the importance of customer service and changing how we work at McCormick Place and Navy Pier will help to ensure the long-term health of the convention and trade show industry in Chicago," said Local 134 Business Manager Timothy J. Foley. "We recognize how competitive the industry is and are willing to do our part to help Chicago remain at the top of the list as a convention destination."

The move was immediately welcomed by show organizers who say they expect positive results from MPEA providing a resident workforce of electricians who are more focused on the needs of the customers.

"Improving customer service at our show is critically important to us. We are very interested in an environment that will foster and improve the quality of service we offer our customers," said Peter Eelman, Vice President-Exhibitions and Communications for International Manufacturing Technology Show (IMTS). "This is a dramatic shift that will translate into meaningful changes for exhibitors and proves that MPEA leadership listens and responds to our concerns."

Also applauding the effort is Mia Rampersad, Vice President, Trade Shows of the International Housewares Association who said, "Our show is one of the largest annual shows to take place in Chicago. We have to be cost-efficient and customer-friendly to keep our exhibitors coming back each year. This change will go a long way in helping us meet customer demands for high-quality service and cost-control."

In the reorganization, MPEA increased the number of foremen at both its facilities while decreasing their areas of responsibility -- one foreman per 50,000 square feet of exhibit floor space, compared with previous ratio of 1: 85,000 square feet. This change puts the most highly skilled workers on the floor in a supervisory role and creates a more nimble, responsive workforce overall.

Increasing the number of foremen on show floors allows more direct oversight and closer performance evaluation of the electricians retained on a show-by-show basis. Talented individuals who demonstrate exemplary performance will be invited to join MPEA's pool of resident electricians as show demands gradually dictate the need for a larger resident workforce.

MPEA's 50 foremen were selected from the pool of electricians experienced in working as foremen, following an extensive review process. The approximately 100 journeymen electricians no longer in the resident pool for McCormick Place and Navy Pier will return to the Local 134 union hall for re-assignment to other work based on Local 134's selection process.

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