

Training Center To Post Pre-Test for Fire/Life Safety Exam

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The state certification exam for fire/life safety technician will be offered at the San Francisco testing site beginning in June. Certification for the fire alarm test must be completed by Jan. 1, 2005.

In order to help technicians prepare for the test, the JATC's fire alarm state certification pre-test will be posted for review on the web in April, according to Vince Cosentino. Regional Training Director of the Northern California Sound & Communication Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee.

Access and passwords for the web site pre-exam will be distributed through each Local. The pre-test is available without charge. Cosentino said that the subject matter covered in the pre-test on line is also being integrated into the classroom curriculum of the JATCs.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANK GARCIA

Students at the Santa Clara JATC learn necessary skills to become expert IBEW technicians of the future.

hundred questions. A 70% correct score is required to pass.

The fire/life safety test covers the following topics: principles, testing and certification of systems, fundamentals, fire detection and alarm systems, grounding and bonding applications, conductors and cables, NFPA-72 and NEC, and low-voltage circuits and equipment.

Applications for the state certification test can be downloaded at <http://www.dir.ca.gov/DAS/ElectricalCertificationForm.pdf>. Applications are also available through each Local and through the Training Center.

VDV Pretest Being Prepared

In addition to the fire/life safety pre-test, Cosentino says the NORCAL

JATC is also preparing a VDV pre-test that will soon be available. The pre-test will help to prepare for the state certification exam for VDV technicians, which is pending.

Apprentice Hours Changed

Cosentino also said that the requirement for on-the-job training for apprentices has changed from 6,000 hours to 4,800 hours, as of December 1.

JATC locations

Training centers are located in nine Bay Area counties, including Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Napa-Solano, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Santa Rosa. For complete contact information, see www.norcalvdv.org.



A publication of the National Electrical Contractors Association and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers of Northern California.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VINCE COSENTINO

There are 50 multiple choice questions on the fire/life safety technician exam, with a two hour time limit to complete the test. The test is administered on a computer. The questions for each exam are randomly chosen by a computer from a bank of several



Golf Tourney

The Northern California Sound and Communications LMCC is proud to announce the 4th Annual VDV Golf Tournament. Peacefully tucked in and around the hills, a short drive south of fast-paced Silicon Valley, Cinnabar Hills Golf Club blends championship-caliber golf with spectacular views.

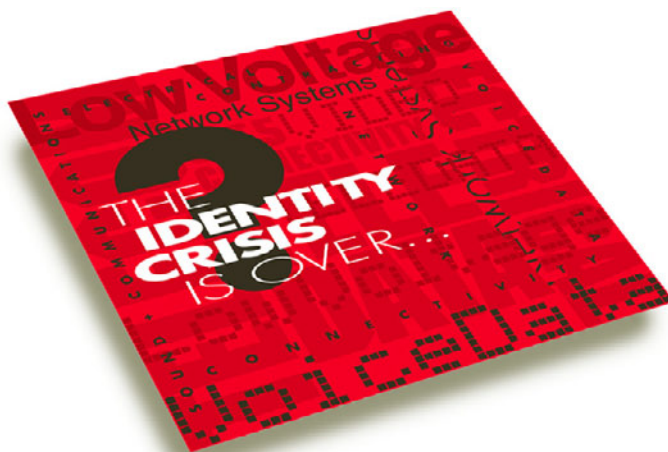
April 8, 2004
Cinnabar Hills
12:30 pm Shot Gun
Scramble Format

Each entry will receive:

- Green Fees
- Half Cart
- Check-in Gifts
- Drinks on Course
- Lunch
- BBQ Dinner
- Hosted Cocktail Party
- Award Ceremony
- Raffle

Entry fee:
\$125 per person
\$500 per foursome

LMCC Marketing Efforts Help Create Jobs



Members of the NORCAL VDV Labor Management Cooperative Committee have launched a full-scale marketing effort this year to heighten the visibility of union contractors within the VDV sector.

The new marketing efforts include two newsletters aimed at different audiences. The first, called *The Voice* is an 8 page full color newsletter targeted to customers, prospective customers, and consultants. It will be published and mailed three times a year, with the first



issue appearing in April, 2004.

The Voice will promote IBEW/NECA projects and the advantages of using an IBEW/NECA contractor, as well as technical advancements in the industry. Its goal is to gain increased visibility and new business for NORCAL VDV contractors.

To help stay better informed about local industry developments, contrac-

tors and technicians will have their own separate newsletter, "The Data", published quarterly. The Data will cover regional training news, upcoming events, updates on benefits, and a briefing on man-hours. The Data will be mailed to contractors, and distributed to technicians through each local.

New NORCAL VDV Logo

On the mastheads, both newsletters will feature the new NORCAL VDV logo, which was created several years ago by the LMCC Committee. The NORCAL VDV logo is a distinctive red, black and white brand that quickly identifies a union contractor. The NORCAL VDV logo is available for downloading on the NORCAL VDV website, www.norcalvdv.org. The logo can be applied to hats, T-shirts, trucks, signs, letterhead, newsletters, and brochures so that union contractors can be easily identified.

The LMCC Committee decided to promote a new VDV logo in Northern California after conducting an extensive telephone survey of current and prospective customers. The survey revealed that most customers were confused about what to call contractors/technicians in the industry, and didn't understand the advantages

of hiring a union contractor.

The new logo helped lessen the confusion by quickly identifying union contractors within the VDV segment of the industry. The LMCC committee has sent several mailers to contractors to make them aware of the new brand, and to encourage them to use it in their business. The committee encourages all contractors and technicians to proudly display the new logo.

New NORCAL VDV Website

Survey respondents also indicated that they would be interested in a web site focused on the VDV industry in Northern California that identified union contractors. In response, the LMCC committee created www.norcalvdv.org to tell the union story. In addition to industry news and information about the benefits of using a union contractor, the web site features a list of all the signatory contractors in Northern California, organized alphabetically, by county, by zip, and by specialty.

How to Use and Download New VDV Logo

The VDV brand is now available for use on your marketing and communications materials. Visit www.norcalvdv.org and click on "The VDV Brand" to download the logo. Your use of the VDV brand will help it grow in recognition and identify you as a qualified member of the Sound and Communications industry.



SOUND AND
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of Northern California



Professionalism: Key to Customer Confidence

Having the proper appearance and demeanor when you are dispatched to a job site goes a long way with customers in securing future work in the industry. The proper demeanor creates an attitude of professionalism that helps to set union workers apart from their non-union counterparts.

Bruce Baxter, Senior Vice President of Cupertino Electric (Sound and Communications Company Ceitronics is a CEI division) says that the correct appearance and manner contribute to the perception of excellence in the mind of

the consumer.

"How you dress and how you act matters," says Baxter. "Federal Express workers and UPS employees always look sharp and behave courteously, and it makes an impression on customers. Those of us who work in this industry always want to dress neatly and have pristine trucks and tools. Most importantly, we need to treat customers with the same courtesy and respect we would expect of a guest in our own living room."

The Industry's 'Top Eight' Checklist for Being Professional:

1. Clothes matter. Wear a clean shirt with sleeves and no holes.
2. Don't wear cut offs. Make sure pants are clean and without holes.
3. Your truck is your office. It needs to be clean and organized. Don't have a lot of equipment hanging untidily from the back.
4. You are not a handyman. Have your tools in good working order and undamaged.
5. When you start a job, ask the client if there are any specific protocols you should follow when you are working in the facility—for instance, is there any area you should not enter, or a specific door you should use.
6. Ask the client who your contact person is, and who you should go to if you have a question.
7. Leave the job site clean and in good working order.
8. Always be polite, courteous, and cheerful.

New Sound and Communications Agreement Ratified

A three-year sound and communications agreement has recently been approved by the Northern California labor/management negotiating committee and ratified by the IBEW membership. The agreement is now waiting final sign off by the international office of the International Electrical Workers Union.

Northern California negotiations were completed in November, after two and one-half months of bargaining. The local agreement was approved after earlier talks resulted in an impasse that looked like it might go to arbitration. "The negotiations went very well," said Gary Walker of Walker Communications Inc., who chaired the Contractors Committee.

"S & C contractors were fully involved with the negotiations, with each member recommended by the Northern California S & C Steering Committee and appointed by Bob Daoust, International Vice-President of NECA," said Walker. "We both sat down and looked at the issues we needed to solve and looked at what was best for the industry. For the first time we came up with a 3 year contract, which allows us to put more focus on the industry." NECA members can contact Doug Lung for copies and questions on the agreement.



Agreement helps bring certainty to the industry

"We reached what we felt was a fair agreement," said Bruce Gourley, Business Manager for IBEW Local 180 in Napa and Chairman of the Contract Negotiation Committee. Gourley added that that the agreement would help to bring more certainty to the industry in Northern California. "A three year agreement in an uncertain economy provides stability for the members and the contractors, and paves the way for future negotiations to go well," he said. "Typical of many of the negotiations in the past, both sides had a focus on settling it here, rather than taking it to arbitration."

IBEW members have received a printout of the agreement. Those with questions about the agreement can email any questions to Bruce Gourley at bruceg@ibewlu180.org.

In addition to Gourley, members of the negotiating committee included: For Labor: Mike Meals, Local 617, Shane Stoltenberg, Local 595, Bob Tragni, Local 332, and Mike Yarbrough, Local 302. In addition to Gary Walker, members of Management included: Don Campbell, NorCal NECA, Bart Dickson, San Francisco NECA, Doug Lung, Santa Clara NECA, Jason McClean, East Central California Chapter NECA, Ken Paganini, Paganini Electric, Chris Payne, Contra Costa Electric, and Ben Wadsworth, River City Communications.

Your Trust Fund Important Phone Numbers

Questions about eligibility for coverage, premiums, reserve accounts and info booklets, call:

United Administrative Services
408-288-4452
Toll-Free 800-541-8059

**Trust Self-Funded Medical Plan
Trust Dental Plan**
Questions about claim payment, claim forms and benefit info:
408-288-4481
Toll-Free 800-541-8059

Blue Cross PPO
www.bluecrossca.com
To locate a participating preferred provider physician, clinic, or hospital:
408-288-4452 or 800-541-8059
Refer to Group # 170016M001

Interplan/DentInex Dental PPO
www.interplancorp.com
To locate a participating preferred provider dentist:
Toll-Free 800-444-4036

Kaiser Permanente
www.kaiserpermanente.org
Questions about benefit info and ID Cards:
Toll-Free 800-464-4000
Refer to Group # 919

Health Net www.health.net
Questions about benefit info and ID Cards:
Toll-Free 800-522-0088
Refer to Group # 57845A

PacificCare
www.pacificare.com
Questions about benefit info and ID Cards:
Toll-Free 800-624-8822
Refer to Group # 402457

PacificCare Behavioral Health
www.pbhi.com
Questions about mental health benefits or the member assistance program: 877-225-2267
Group # 10000824-0001, 0002

Vision Service Plan
www.vsp.com
Questions about vision benefits and vision claims or to request a Vision Plan Provider Directory:
Toll-Free 800-877-7195

To order additional copies of *The Data* contact
laura@ahcommunications.com

Health/Welfare Plan Update

Healthcare costs continue to rise at double digit increases each year. As these cost increases build up, they are compounded and eventually passed on to the Trust. The Board of Trustees has little control over the increases, which are driven by a number of factors, including increased utilization of benefits, expensive disease treatments, prescription drug costs, new medical technology, and new federal laws and regulations.

Joseph P. Herrle, President of Joseph H. Herrle & Associates, who serves as the Trust's Employee Benefit Plan Consultant, says that until the last several years, the Trust was able to absorb the increases without having to increase the monthly charge to the participant's reserve account for benefits.

"The structure of the Trust and the health and welfare benefits provided has remained the same for many years," said Herrle. "The participants of the Plan have been able to enjoy a high level of medical benefits for a relatively low price when compared to many other multi-employer, collectively

bargained health and welfare trusts."

In 2002 there was a decline in the reserves of the Trust, due to a declining investment market, compounded by rising health care costs. "Because of the decline, the monthly charge to participants' reserves accounts for benefits was increased," said Herrle. "Additionally, the hourly health and welfare contribution rates were increased as well, as voted for by the membership. This was done to ensure the financial health of the Trust going forward without having to reduce benefits."

"Participants and Trustees are partners in this. Anytime you can find a way to make a less expensive health care choice—without sacrificing quality of care—it helps to keep all of our costs from rising so fast," Herrle added.

How can you help yourself and the trust save money?

Herrle said the current plan of benefits rivals most IBEW health and welfare plans in the region. Participants can help themselves and the Trust to save money by making educated and cost effective health care choices, including:

- Utilizing the Blue Cross Preferred Provider Organization (P.P.O.) network of physicians, clinics and hospitals and the Interplan/DentInex Dental (P.P.O.) network of dentists. (The member's out-of-pocket expense is less and the Trust receives large discounts versus "retail" costs of services.)
- Utilizing a generic drug as an alternative to a brand name drug. They are just as effective.

Hourly Contribution Rate History

Term	Hourly Contribution Rate
January 1, 1997 to August 31, 2002	\$2.20 Per Hour
September 1, 2002 to April 30, 2003	\$3.20 Per Hour
May 1, 2003 to November 30, 2003	\$3.45 Per Hour
December 1, 2003 to Year-to-Date	\$4.45 Per Hour

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