

## ***Survival of the Fittest: Mark Breslin Speaks to IBEW Members***

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What would your life and career in the union be like if the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers controlled 90% of the available work in sound and communications in Northern California? Chances are it would mean you would have higher wages, better benefits, and greater job security, along with more hours, favorable working conditions, and less stress.

How can VDV NORCAL workers attain a 90% market share? According to Mark Breslin, a union contractor and national speaker on union issues, IBEW VDV members need to adapt to the changing marketplace and live up to the union promise. Breslin made his remarks at a lecture called "Survival of the Fittest" at Local 332 on April 7. About 100 IBEW members attended the talk, which was designed to help members better understand how to respond to the changing marketplace and help them achieve greater career success.

Breslin, CEO of the Engineering and Utility Contractors Association, discussed the decline of market share for union contractors and union members in the building trades to outline the enormity of the union vs. non-union struggle. Breslin said 30 years ago, the building trade unions had 75% of all construction work in the U.S. Today, that percentage is down to 13%—a decline of over 60%.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURA WINDISCH

**Union speaker Mark Breslin interacts with audience members attending his lecture at Local 332.**

"Survival of the fittest is not just a little slogan when you go from 75% to 13% of the market," said Breslin. "It is a reality of what is needed to compete in the business right now." Survival, he said, is about adapting to change. He urged union members to "add value"

at the job site to help promote the union difference and to help improve market share.

"The status of the marketplace is one of our realities," said Breslin. Unable to com-

pete with the non-union competition's bottom line, the IBEW must offer the marketplace an added value. Audience members were called upon to deliver elements of the union business proposition. "If we deliver this, the numbers go up. If we don't, the numbers go down," explained Breslin.

According to the audience, the union's business proposition includes:

- High skill
- Safety
- Quality
- Motivation
- Extensive training
- Professionalism
- Reliability
- Predictable bid cost
- Organized
- Specialized
- Third party to help with disputes
- 24/7 dispatch capability
- Equipped personnel
- Ability to meet client needs
- Lower insurance costs
- Standards for quality,
- Union only jobs (PLA)
- Political clout
- Certifications
- The Apprenticeship Program

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## How to Download and Use New VDV Logo

The VDV brand is now available for use on your marketing and communications materials. Visit [www.norcalvdv.org](http://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.

# 61 Sound and Communication Apprentices Graduate from NORCAL JATC Program!

Recent graduation ceremonies marked the formal start of careers for scores of apprentices from the NORCAL Sound and Communications JATC program. The 61 graduates from the class of 2005 represent all nine Northern California Locals.

Santa Clara Local 332 had the highest number of graduates with 18, and Alameda Local 595 was not far behind with a total of 16 graduates.

Four graduates from four locals received the Sound and Communications Outstanding Apprentice award for academic achievement and program participation. This award was presented to Nicholas Abeyta, Napa/Solano, Local



**Local 595 Training Director Ty McKinney with Outstanding Apprentice Jose Luis Munoz.**

## Mark Breslin Speaks *(continued from page 1)*

Breslin called the IBEW "the Rolex of the construction industry," responsible for explaining the intricacies of union benefits in a tangible, operational, and economic manner.

He said that rank-and-file members who are not delivering the union promise are the "fatal flaw" of the union.

"These kinds of lectures really help those who are looking to the future to elevate their work status," said audience member George Narso. "These are the type of events they should have every month."

180; Stephen Brandreth, Santa Clara Local 332; Brian Bierbaum, Sacramento, Local 340; and Jose Luis Munoz, Alameda, Local 595.

### Sound and Communications graduates include:

**San Francisco:** Local 6 honored its graduates on July 16th at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. Graduates include: Judith Cabrera-Canelo, Michael Cockley, Patrick Coonrod, and Raymond Kwong.

**Fresno:** Local 100 held its graduation ceremony at Tornino's Banquets on June 24th. Congratulations Fred Maldonado!

**Napa/Solano:** Local 180 held its ceremonies at Napa Elk's Lodge on June 3rd for graduate and Outstanding Apprentice Nicholas Abeyta.

**Contra Costa:** Local 302 held its ceremonies at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Concord on June 2nd. Graduates include: Arthur Flores, Calvin Ricks, Michael Kaster, Shawn Crane, Eduardo Hierro and Alfredo Cisneros.

**Santa Clara:** Local 332, celebrated on June 10th at the Fairmont Hotel in San

Jose. Congratulations to the graduates who include: Stephen Brandreth, Jason Burns, Roney Cardoza, Jose Casorla, Steven Cornaggia, Michael Demeny, Anthony Garcia, Aurelio Gomez, Matthew Halicho, Kenneth Keller, Gustavo Lizaraga, Jr., Andrew Molina, Michael Padgett, Michael Peck, Cecilio Reyes, Brian Roeder, Raul Sanchez, and Kevin Schmidt.



**Local 332 Sound and Communication Grads**

**Sacramento:** Local 340 commenced at the Holiday Inn Capital Plaza in Sacramento on May 20th. Graduates include: Brian Bierbaum, David Dean, Craig Polete, Joel Polete, Greg Van Dersluis, Chandeng Sandara, and Thomas Frenzel.

**Santa Rosa:** Local 551 celebrated on May 13th at Graciano's in Santa Rosa. Congratulations to James B. Gratiot!

**Alameda:** Local 595 honored its graduates on February 26, 2005 at Castlewood Country Club in Pleasanton. Graduates include: Russel R Compton, Robert DeCoite, Ryan Duceour, Vance C. Fisher, Russell Johnson, Robert Lopez, Jose L. Munoz, Ramon Pintor, Ariel Silongan, Joe Simmons, Charles E. Smith, Jeffery A. Stark, Jabari S. Thibeaux, Sean Tomlin, Jason R. Walker, and Kevin D. Ward.

**San Mateo:** Local 617 will be holding their graduation ceremonies on October 7th, 2005 at the Elks Lodge of San Mateo. Congratulations to the prospective graduates: Michael Barrientos, Patrick Benson, Ryan Chewning, Joseph Graff, Michael Metz, and Jiles Salmon.

Breslin has lectured at Local 332 several times. "The IBEW is the only union anywhere in the United States that wants the rank and file to get a picture about what is really going on," said Breslin.

Mark Breslin is the CEO of the Engineering and Utility Contractors Association, representing about 200 union contractors in the western United States. He has made presentations on labor-management relations to several thousand people across the country and is the author of *Organize or Die* (2003) and *Survival of the Fittest* (2004).

# New JATC Curriculum For First Year Students Begins In Fall 2005



COURTESY OF FRANK GARCIA

*The restructured JATC curriculum includes an option for a fourth year of study.*

The NORCAL JATC is unveiling a new curriculum for first year students this fall, with a revised second and third year curriculum being readied for Fall 2006. The curriculum is being implemented through a national VDV Advisory committee created to restructure the program.

In addition to implementing the new curriculum, the VDV Advisory Board also decided to make the three year program a four year program, with the fourth year optional.

Four NORCAL representatives were among 16 that served on the national VDV Advisory Committee: Frank Garcia, Santa Clara County JATC; Ty McKinney, Alameda County JATC; Jason Whipple, Sacramento County JATC; and Gary Walker, Walker Communications. The committee met on October 6-7th in Knoxville, TN at the NJATC Training Center.

## The New Curriculum

The new curriculum is designed in a modular format to allow locals nationwide to customize their sound and communication programs. Each module will have its own workbook with corresponding textbook. Each module will have three levels of difficulty: beginner, intermediate and advanced. In addition to these levels, the workbook and text will also include advanced lesson material for journeymen and installers. JATC training instructors will have access to comprehensive lesson plans, labs, quizzes, midterms and finals.

"Hypothetically, first year apprentices here may be more valuable to our industry knowing voice and data cabling," said Ty McKinney, Northern California Apprenticeship Career Coordinator. "On the other hand, it may be more valuable for first

year apprentices on the East Coast to know fire alarm. By building this curriculum in a modular format, it allows local areas to utilize the same overall information, but put it in a format that best suits their jurisdictional needs."

One of the benefits of the new curriculum includes lower costs for textbooks. Instead of students purchasing four or five textbooks and workbooks per year, the new curriculum is designed for students to purchase one textbook and one workbook per module. This will dramatically lower book prices for students, and the textbooks and workbooks will be used consistently throughout all three years of the program.

An additional benefit to the new curriculum is that as technology shifts, the new modular format

makes updating the textbooks with cutting edge information simple.

The VDV Advisory Committee is developing proficiency exams to correspond with the curriculum. The exams, both written and hands-on, determine the skill level of an apprentice. Based on the results, the apprentice can begin with the intermediate or advanced modules created in the new curriculum.

Another decision made by the VDV Advisory Committee was to make the three year apprenticeship program a four year program, making the fourth year optional. The decision of a Local to mandate a fourth year would be up to the jurisdiction of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and the trust which is responsible for the administration in the Sound and Communications program.

## Modules

Orientation, safety, code, blueprint reading, DC theory, electronic theory, digital theory, power quality UPS, structured cabling, LAN, telephone, sound, paging, fire alarm, CCTV, building automation, nurse call, home technology, security, testing, project supervision.

If you have any questions about the new curriculum, please contact Ty McKinney, Alameda, Local 595, at 510-351-5282 or e-mail at [tymckinney@yahoo.com](mailto:tymckinney@yahoo.com).

## 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

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# New Benefits for Domestic Partners

The IBEW/NECA Sound and Communications Health and Welfare Trust has recently been updated to include benefits for Domestic Partners. The new coverage provides Domestic Partners the same type of health benefits for actives or dependents (spouse and children).

## Establishing Domestic Partnership

A Declaration of Domestic Partnership form needs to be filled out to establish "domestic partner" eligibility.

### Some of the requirements include:

- Each Domestic Partner must be 18 years or older
- Neither were married or had another Domestic Partner within 12 months
- The Plan Participant and the Domestic Partner must share the same permanent residence
- The Plan Participant and the Domestic Partner cannot be prevented from marriage due to being blood relations
- Both partners must be competent to consent to contract

## Tax Consequences

- The Employer must add the fair market value of coverage that is provided to the Domestic Partner as income in the W-2 of the Plan Participant.
- The Employer must agree to pay payroll taxes (FICA and FUTA) on that additional reported income

## Comparison of Benefits

- Not all the benefits extended to a spouse are the same for a Domestic Partner. For instance, there are no COBRA rights extended to a Domestic Partner
- Medical benefit options and coverage are the generally the same

## Enrolling Domestic Partners in the Plan

- The Domestic Partner and the Plan Participant must sign the Affidavit of Domestic Partner
- The Domestic Partner must select coverage
- The Employer of the Plan Participant must agree to pay all FICA and FUTA taxes as noted above

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