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## ***JATC Instructor Thomas Witt Brings 27 Years Of Experience To Teaching***

# JATC

Instructor Thomas Witt has spent 27 years in the communications industry, including stints as an Installer, Technician, Senior Technician and sales rep. He began his career in the US Navy, where he learned basic electricity and electronics, and then joined Simplex Time Recorder Company. While at Simplex, he worked on mechanical and electronic time clocks, master clocks, fire alarm systems and intercom systems. He joined the IBEW in 1999 as an Installer.

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Some subjects the new JATC Instructor Thomas Witt teaches are AC theory, computer skills, master clock, nurse call, fire alarm, emergency communication systems and paging.



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Thomas Witt's favorite subject to teach is fire alarm; it is his "passion".

## JATC Instructor Thomas Witt Brings 27 Years Of Experience To Teaching

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Witt became a JATC Instructor this year. He teaches AC theory, computer skills, master clock, nurse call, fire alarm, emergency communication systems and paging. He says fire alarm is his "passion" and his favorite subject to teach.

Continuing our profiles of NorCal Sound & Communication JATC Instructors, we asked Thomas a few questions about his career and teaching philosophy.

**Q: Why did you decide to become an Instructor?**

**A:** There are so many trade jobs available, I wanted to do my part to pass on what I had learned. I hope to live up to the excellence exhibited by everyone working here.

**Q: What do you like best about teaching at the JATC?**

**A:** The teamwork. Teamwork here isn't lip service. We mean it. There is no slack that needs to be picked up because everyone here is a highly motivated professional dedicated to the mission of the JATC. It's refreshing to work with people who have that elevated esprit de corps and morale.

**Q: What is the greatest challenge students face in the program?**

**A:** Balancing family life with work obligations. It shows a level of dedication, commitment, and motivation. I am constantly blown away that the apprentices perceive that much value in our program and I strive to be worthy of that.

**Q: What do you think of the current curriculum to help students in the field?**

**A:** I'm only eight months into my teaching

career. So far, I've found that there really isn't enough time to teach all the material that I would like to cover. How I will address that going forward is something I give a great amount of thought to. Ask me again in a year!

**Q: How do you try to motivate students to learn?**

**A:** I try to relate what is being taught to a real-life situation that I or someone in the class has experienced. I encourage that kind of discussion because I think that makes it easier to learn.

**Q: What kind of person should seek admittance to the apprentice program?**

**A:** Someone who is there because they want to be there. That provides the motivation and enthusiasm needed to keep going when life gets tough. Motivation is key in our industry. Without motivation, there's no desire to strive for excellence.

**Q: What skills do you think students need to do well in the program?**

**A:** Attention to detail; the ability to read and follow product installation sheets; the ability to read and follow blueprints; being able to use the proper tool for each application.

**Q: What is the career future for an apprentice who graduates?**

**A:** The sky is really the limit. You can start as an installer and, with the proper motivation and drive, end up owning a low-voltage company. With the skills learned as an apprentice and a few years' experience, you can go anywhere.

**Q: What is your most memorable day in the classroom?**

**A:** Dancing to Barry Manilow's "Copacabana" while testing the students' fire alarm override of the paging system. The longer it took for students to activate the fire alarm, the closer I danced to their lab station.

**Q: What are your hobbies?**

**A:** Long distance, epic pain-and-suffering bicycle rides. I'm a three-time 5-Pass Finisher of the Markleeville Death Ride. Shooting sports, mountain biking, camping, and boating--I have a 52-year-old hole in the water I call a boat.

**Q: What books do you read in your free time?**

**A:** I'm a military sci-fi novel junkie.



# ***NorCal Sound & Communication JATC Holds Fringe Benefit Fair***

**70** participants attended The NorCal S&C JATC Fringe Benefit Fair on July 21st at the NorCal Technology Training Center. The Fair featured three separate classes, including The IBEW District 9 Pension Plan; The National Electrical Benefit Fund (NEBF) and the IBEW/NECA Sound and Communications Health and Welfare Plan. Lunch was provided after the workshop.

The speaker for the The IBEW District 9 Pension Plan was Joe Herrle, Plan Administrator, who discussed the participant directed defined contribution pension plan.

The speaker for the IBEW/NECA Sound and Communications Health and Welfare Plan was Sandy Stephenson, Third-Party Administrator, who discussed the health and welfare benefits that are offered. These benefits include the medical plan options, the HRA benefit, and the short-term disability benefit.

The NEBF presentation outlined the defined benefit pension plan. The NEBF is the 3rd largest Taft-Hartley Defined Benefit Pension Plan in the US by total assets.

According to the NEBF handout, there are a total of 571,505 participants in

the Fund, with 143,450 participants receiving benefits. Of those participants, 18.3% (26,246) are receiving normal retirement benefits; 48.3% (69,252) are receiving early retirement benefits; 14.8% (21,271) are receiving disability benefits and 18.6% (26,681) are receiving spouse/beneficiary benefits.

To receive normal retirement benefits you must be vested, be age 65 or older and be retired from the electrical industry. To receive an early retirement benefit, you must be vested, be between the ages of 60 and 64 and be retired from the electrical industry. There are 3 types of early retirement benefits: a reduced benefit at 62, 63, or 64; an unreduced benefit at 62, 63, or 64, and a reduced benefit at 60 or 61.

To receive a disability benefit, you must be vested when you become totally disabled, be younger than 65, and have worked for a covered employer sometime within 5 years of becoming totally disabled. To receive a pre-retirement spouse benefit, you must be vested, be married to your spouse for one year prior to your death, and have worked at least one hour in covered employment on or after September 1, 1984.

***More information on the National Electrical Benefit Fund benefits can be obtained online at [www.nebf.com](http://www.nebf.com) or by calling (301) 556-4300. You can request an NEBF statement online and see your work history, years of service, and an estimated benefit amount.***

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# **THE NORCAL SOUND & COMMUNICATION JATC IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE 2018 GRADUATES:**

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*"We would like to offer congratulations to the 2018 class of apprentices who have completed the Related Supplemental Instruction portion of the Apprenticeship program and are tentatively scheduled to graduate. Our industry thrives on a skilled, highly trained labor force and our apprentices are our future!"*

## **LOCAL 595**

Pablo J. Chavez  
Sean P. Ferguson  
Michael S. Krassilnikoff  
Shannon R. Leeds  
Sergio S. Chaves  
Nicholas R. Fitzgerald  
Cameron J. Gooding  
Timothy S. Horner  
Tanner D. King  
Daniel F. Olivera  
Favian Ramos  
Fernando Sanchez  
Michael T. Segarra  
Samuel M. Swengel

## **LOCAL 302**

Joseph Bologna  
Jeffrey E. Butson  
Bryant P. Maly  
James A. Smith, Jr.  
Gabriel Wence  
Jared V. Wise

## **LOCAL 332**

Louie C. Andrade  
Ricky J. Cassata  
Manuel J. Castillo  
Malachi J. Cizneroz  
George M. Clark  
Jesse T. Clarke  
Emmanuel W. Cristobal  
Tony Doan

Erik J. Frantzich  
Kevin M. Gonzalez  
Jose J. Gonzalez  
Bulmaro Guizar  
Aaron D. Hughes  
Jeffrey B. Hunceker  
Francisco J. Lozano-Canedo  
Kevin Mac  
Andres J. Macias  
Phil D. Maggi  
William M. Markes  
Jonathan I. Mena  
Ryan T. Miles  
Gerald D. Montgomery  
Surinder Multani  
Nhan T. Nguyen  
Steven E. Palacios  
Gustavo N. Paragon Arias  
Sean Salehnejad  
Julian A. Sanchez  
Herbert W. Schue III  
Kyle A. Six  
Pablo Vazquez  
Ernesto Velasco  
Nicholas B. Vinson  
Eric L. Wright  
Nicolas A. Yurasek Jr.

## **LOCAL 6**

Aaron J. Chaput  
Baoye Chen  
Roland L. Curtis

James C. Hyde  
Manuel A. Mendoza  
Augusto P. Pepa  
Thomas D. Parisi

## **LOCAL 617**

Anthony W. Johnson  
Hector Khan  
Bernard L. May  
Kyle M. Merellas  
Jonathan Picos  
Manuel Unzueta Jr.

## **LOCAL 340**

Kenneth W. Braswell III

## **LOCAL 180**

Stephen D. Cook III  
Benjamin J. Lent  
Andrew D. Lucero  
Christian K. Sligar

## **LOCAL 234**

Cory C. Hoffman

## **LOCAL 551**

Mark E. Alkire  
Andres J. Mendez

## **LOCAL 100**

Nathan Hume  
Audi Insisiengmay  
Jimmy Turpin III  
James Wood

# IBEW Pension Death Benefits Outlined

This is the first of a multi-part series in the DATA outlining the IBEW pension death benefits. This excerpt is taken from a general explanatory guide by the International Executive Council (I.E.C.), who compiled the questions and answers.

**Q: What conditions must be observed by an “A” member who wishes to retain the death benefits of the IBEW Pension Benefit Plan?**

**A:** An “A” member must have at least six (6) months’ continuous and active good standing as an “A” member to be eligible under the death benefit provision of the Pension Benefit Fund. A death benefit shall not be payable upon the death of any member in arrears for dues for more than two (2) months, unless it can be demonstrated that the arrearage was not the fault of the member, in which case the death benefit shall be reduced by the amount of the arrearage.

**Q: What is the benefit from the Pension Benefit Fund paid upon death from natural causes of non-retired “A” member holding six or more months of continuous “A” membership?**

**A:** The Pension Benefit Fund pays \$6,250 upon the death of an eligible “A” member from natural causes.

**Q: What is the benefit from the Pension Benefit Fund paid upon the accidental death of non-retired “A” member, holding six or more months of continuous “A” membership?**

**A:** The Pension Benefit Fund pays \$12,500 if an eligible “A” member’s death is caused by accidental means.

**Q: What provisions are made for benefits payable upon the death of a retired “A” member?**

**A:** Upon the death of a retired “A” member from natural causes or accidental means, the member’s beneficiary will receive \$6,250 minus all pension benefits paid by the IBEW Pension Benefit Fund to the retired member up to \$3,250. Thus if a member has received \$3,250 or more in pension benefits, the death benefit payable upon the death of that member shall be \$3,000, which is computed by subtracting \$3,250 from \$6,250.

\* This excerpt is taken from the Questions and Answers Concerning the Provisions and Procedures of the IBEW Pension Benefit Fund (Revised May 2012).

# Installer/Tech Upgrade Classes Update

The Northern California Sound and Communication JATC holds upgrade classes for Installers/Technicians throughout the year. For detailed information on dates, times, and locations for these classes, please visit our website at [www.norcal-jatc.com](http://www.norcal-jatc.com).

We offer online classes for preparation for the VDV/Fire Life Safety Test. The classes allow you to not only take the practice tests but also includes lessons on each subject. To register for the Practice Exam, click the Practice Exam Course button.

You can also register for OSHA 10/OSHA 30 Certification classes, which earn continuing education hours. To register, go to the website, click on Installer/Technician, and then select classes. Click on the OSHA 10 or OSHA 30 button to register.

The screenshot shows the website for Northern California Sound & Communication JATC. The main heading is 'Classes'. Below it, there is a note: 'Below is a list of possible classes that are offered to Installer/Technicians at this time. Note: You will need to contact [info@norcal-jatc.com](mailto:info@norcal-jatc.com) to obtain a password in order to register for classes.' There are four class listings, each with a 'Register Online' button:

- Financial Tools For The Trades**: Includes a description about partnering with the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans for education in managing and maintaining one's finances. The State of California has not approved this class for Continuing Education for Electrical Certification renewal.
- OSHA-10**: Become OSHA-10 certified. This course includes the study of safety on the job site including: electrical, PPE, ladders and stairways, fall protection, hand and power tools, scaffolds and confined spaces. This course is also considered a safety course that can account for VDV and Fire/Life Safety re-certification.
- OSHA-30**: This course contains many of the same topics as the OSHA 10 course but at a more in-depth level. In addition this course also includes: material handling and storage; cranes, derricks, hoists, elevators and conveyors; excavations; fire protection; health hazards in construction. This course is considered a safety course that can account for VDV and Fire/Life Safety re-certification.
- VDVT and Fire/Life Safety Exam Prep**: Designed to prepare the student for taking the California State VDV and Fire/Life Safety Exam.

The footer contains 'About Us', 'Menu At A Glance' (with links to Home, About Us, Applicants, Apprentices, Installer/Technician, Links, Contact Us), and 'Contact Us' (NorCal SAC JATC Main Office, 510.560.2032, 3620 Avastros Street, San Leandro, CA 94577). A copyright notice for 2018 NorCal JATC is also present.

## Walker Telecomm's Award-Winning Safety Program Is Constantly Evolving!

**Walker Telecomm's safety program received two awards from NECA in 2018, including Safety Excellence and Achievement of Zero Injury. Angel McDonald, Vice President, discusses how the safety program is administered through continuous employer-employee communication.**



PHOTO BY SCP DIGITAL

### Angel McDonald

Vice President,  
Walker Telecomm

**Q: What is your official title at Walker Telecomm, Inc., and how long have you worked there?**

**A:** I am the Vice President and have been with Walker Telecomm, Inc. since the day it incorporated in August 2010.

**Q: Please describe the various components of your safety program and how it is administered?**

**A:** The main components of the Walker Telecomm safety program include management commitment; documented safety philosophy; employee involvement; worksite analysis; hazard prevention and control; safety and health training and education; audits; safety training; accident investigations; and motivation.

Our company's safety and health policies are clearly posted and available for all to see and review. Employees are involved in the decision-making process of policies, and the entire company is expected to take an active part in safety activities. It is our commitment to protect our employees' well-being.

**Q: What is the initial safety training the Walker Telecomm employees go through?**

**A:** We are signatory to the IBEW, therefore all of our employees receive initial safety training while in the apprenticeship program. Once hired at Walker Telecomm, safety is an ongoing process. We require all field staff to maintain a minimum of OSHA 10, along with CPR/First Aid.

**Q: How would you describe your process for implementing the safety program?**

**A:** Our safety program is implemented through inspections, surveillances, incident reporting and investigations, job hazard analysis, corrective actions and constant safety leadership.

**Q: How would you describe Walker Telecomm's safety philosophy?**

**A:** The wellness of our people, families and communities is our number one priority. We embrace healthy habits and behaviors, and our intent is to provide a safe work environment for all of our workers.

**Q: How is employee participation in the safety program encouraged, implemented and reinforced?**

**A:** We regularly communicate with employees about workplace safety and health matters and provide employees with access to information relevant to the safety programs. We provide ways for employees to become involved in hazard identification and assessment, and prioritize hazards, training and program evaluation. We establish ways for employees to report job-related injuries, illnesses, incidents and hazards, and allow employees to make recommendations about appropriate ways to control hazards and provide prompt responses to such reports and recommendations.

**Q: How has your program grown or changed over the past few years? What's new?**

**A:** Our ongoing safety program is constantly changing. In the past year we have made updates to our Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) and added the following

elements to our safety program: LEAD Certification; Stretch and Flex Program; Escalation and Trouble Procedures; Safe Driving practices and a Silica Control Plan.

**Q: What kind of administrative structure has Walker Telecomm put in place to support the safety program?**

**A:** I am responsible for updating all safety programs, and adding newly adopted ones per OSHA, to meet specific jobsite requirements. In addition, I am continually monitoring employees' safety training to keep them up to date and current. We have weekly safety meetings and all foreman are retrained quarterly.

**Q: Does Walker Telecomm have ongoing training opportunities for safety at a management level?**

**A:** I am continually seeking out new safety training opportunities through classes, conventions and conferences.

**Q: How do your customers view safety and do they see the value?**

**A:** Our customers appreciate our commitment to safety. Construction is a safety-driven industry with high standards. Our customers find comfort in knowing that we have met all of their requirements upon asking.

**Q: If you had to use one sentence to sum up safety training at the Walker Telecomm, what would that be?**

**A:** If safety goals and training are not set at zero tolerance, it sends a message that severe and disabling incidents are acceptable.

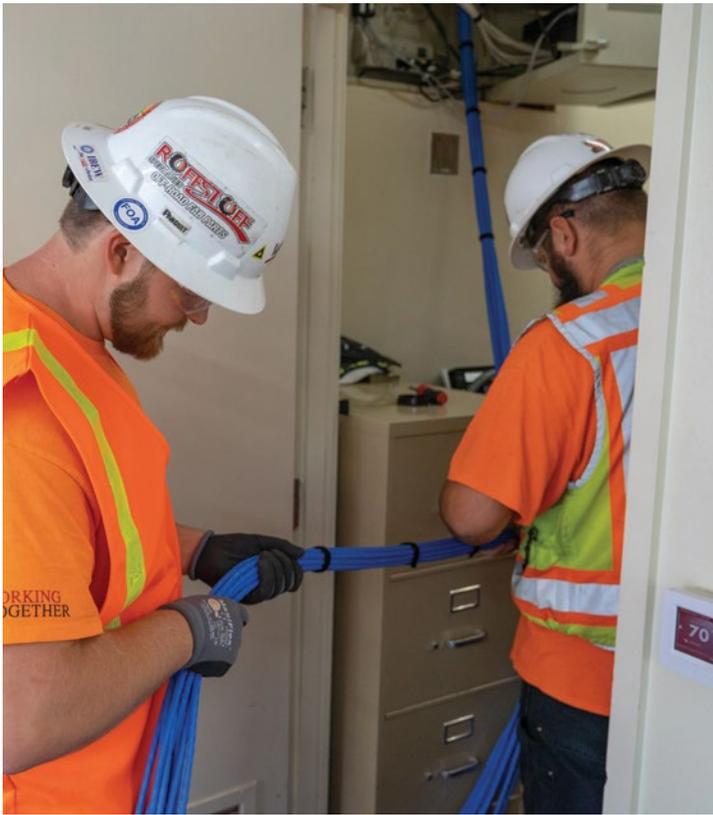


PHOTO BY SCP DIGITAL

*Walker Telecomm provides ways for employees to become involved in hazard identification and assessment, and prioritizes hazards, training and program evaluation.*

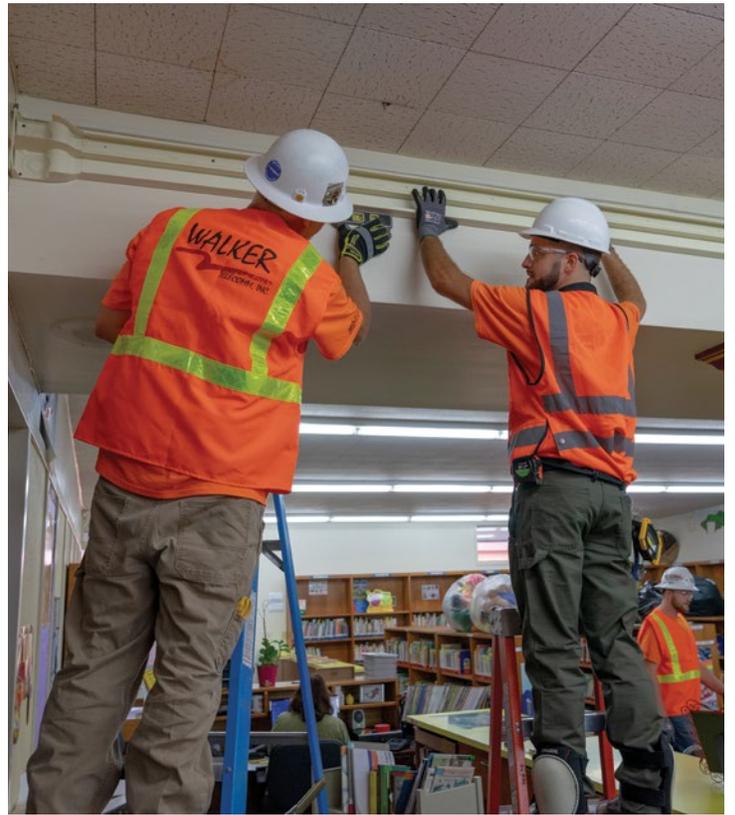


PHOTO BY SCP DIGITAL

*Walker Telecomm's company safety and health policies are clearly posted and available for all to see and review.*



PHOTO BY SCP DIGITAL

*Walker Telecomm updates its safety programs regularly, and adds newly adopted ones per OSHA, to meet specific jobsite requirements*



PHOTO BY SCP DIGITAL

*Walker Telecomm regularly communicates with employees about workplace safety and health matters and provide employees with access to information relevant to the safety programs.*

# Healthcare Usage Myths

Often when we need care, we think it won't cost (the plan) too much more to go to the emergency room instead of your doctor or urgent care or get the brand name drug instead of its generic equivalent. These and other **small decisions about using benefits can add up to large costs.**

Another myth we hear is "the plan is paying for it," as though "the plan" is some unknown corporate entity with deep pockets. This is not the case. **We, as IBEW/NECA Sound & Communications Health & Welfare Plan participants, are "the plan"; when we spend more than necessary, it results in higher premiums and reduced benefits for all of us.**

If we all put in a little thought and effort when we use our health and welfare benefits, it will help ensure the long-term health of our health care plan.



## Your Health And Welfare Trust Fund Important Phone Numbers

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

**Plan Administrator - United Administrative Services**  
408.288.4400  
Toll-Free 877.827.4239

**Trust Self-Funded Medical And Dental Plan**  
Questions about claim payment, claim forms and benefit info:  
408.288.4400  
Toll-Free 800.541.8059

**Anthem Blue Cross Medical PPO**  
[www.anthem.com/ca](http://www.anthem.com/ca)  
To locate a participating preferred provider physician, clinic, or hospital:  
408.288.4400 or 800.541.8059  
Refer to Group # 170016M001

**Anthem Blue Cross Dental PPO**  
[www.anthem.com/ca](http://www.anthem.com/ca)  
To locate a participating preferred provider dentist:  
408.288.4400 or 800.541.8059  
Refer to Group # 170016M001

**Kaiser Permanente**  
[www.kaiserpermanente.org](http://www.kaiserpermanente.org)  
Questions about benefit info and ID Cards:  
Toll-Free 800.464.4000  
Refer to Group # 919

**Optum Health**  
[www.OptumHealth.com](http://www.OptumHealth.com)  
Questions about mental health and substance abuse benefits or the member assistance program: 800.888.2998  
Group # 10000824-0001, 0002

**Vision Service Plan**  
[www.vsp.com](http://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 [scott@hillzoog.com](mailto:scott@hillzoog.com)**

**[norcalvdv.org](http://norcalvdv.org)**



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