

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS

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The Washington Connection

by Jim Hadel
International Vice President and
Washington Representative



Is Your Recovery Plan in Place?

Over the past few years this country has suffered through one of the worst financial disasters and economic periods since the Great Depression. It has obviously taken its toll on many working American families. The roofing and waterproofing industry was not immune to this tragedy; it has affected many of our union brothers and sisters. Although we are far from a complete recovery, economic indicators now point to a growing economy, albeit a slow one in the near future. In fact many economists are forecasting somewhat modest growth and recovery towards the end of 2011 for the commercial construction industry.

With that in mind, and as we approach the peak roofing season this year, know that how we prepare for a recovery is extremely important. Will we be reactionary to the recovering market conditions, or proactive? Too often we react to circumstances as they come along rather than prepare for opportunities. In this case, those who wait and react to expanding market conditions will fall behind and end up chasing lost opportunities. Will we be able to respond and recapture—or gain—market share in a growing economy? Are we in a position to secure work opportunities created by the increase in applications of Vegetative and Solar Photovoltaic (Solar PV) Roof Systems?

With those questions in mind, the most important and immediate issues to consider right now are as follows:

- **Does your local union have an available workforce, both skilled and unskilled, to meet its signatory contractor demands? If not, do you have a contingency plan to recruit a workforce as needed? Has there been communication with your signatory contractors about their future workforce needs?**

- **Is your local JATC effectively training in Vegetative, Solar PV and Cool Roof Systems?**
- **Is your local union marketing to all end users, including general contractors, your JATC program and its ability to train in Vegetative, Green and Cool Roof Systems? Are they marketing the availability of a skilled and trained workforce ready to meet their needs?**

Our industry is rapidly evolving, and these changes are creating new work opportunities in the jurisdiction of roofing and waterproofing, particularly with Vegetative and Solar PV Roof Systems. Along with these opportunities, however, will be serious competition from the non-union sector of our industry.

In addition, technological advances in the construction industry tend to create jurisdictional disputes. We have already experienced this with Vegetative and Solar Photovoltaic roofs. Simply taking the position that this is the historic work of the Roofers and Waterproofers Union is not enough to capture new work opportunities. The weak economy, along with a small union market share, only intensifies the competition for work among the various trades and therefore increases the chances for jurisdictional disputes. There is no “Washington D.C.” solution to the problem. The jurisdictional dispute process, when applicable, is subjective and risky at the least. The only real solution is to secure work for our members at the local union level, and that lies in your responses to the three issues above.

You can now see how crucial it is that every local develop a trained and skilled workforce and a strategy to market this to end users. A local union recruiting, training and marketing strategy should be an ongoing plan, one that is implemented in both booming and recessionary economies. **Our philosophy should be to protect our market share in a down economy and increase our market share in a growing and prosperous economy.** The competition for work today is high as it has ever been in our industry, especially with the increased application of Vegetative and Solar PV Roof Systems. Protecting our work jurisdiction should be an everyday priority of each and every local. Furthermore, we represent the most productive, safe and qualified roofers and waterproofers in the industry, and the time is now to market their skills. The future of the Roofers and Waterproofers Union and our members depends on it. ■