



## Engineers & Scientists of California

Local 20, IFPTE AFL-CIO/CLC

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### Edison Planners and Designers: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

#### **I'm a Professional. What do unions have to do with me?**

Coming together with your colleagues to form a union is about securing a voice at work with an equitable seat at the table with management. A union brings together the collective strength of you and your co-workers to address issues of wages and benefits, staffing and workload, overtime and differentials, trainings, and other terms of your employment in a meaningful way with management that will result in a negotiated union contract. A union ensures professional dignity and respect in the workplace.

The work that Planners and Designers do is critical to community safety and an integral part of keeping Edison functioning. A union ensures that your expertise and knowledge is given proper respect and consideration. A union contract establishes fair working conditions and gives you a seat at the table where important decisions that affect your job are made.

#### **Why do Planners and Designers want to join the Engineers and Scientists of California (ESC) Local 20, IFPTE?**

ESC Local 20 has over 70 years' experience negotiating with companies, like Edison, through our work representing over 100 job classifications (including Planners and Designers) at PG&E. Our mission is to work with professional employees to organize and address their concerns through collective bargaining.

ESC Local 20 is an affiliate of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), the union that organizes and represents professionals at employers such as NASA, Boeing, Hydro One, Tennessee Valley Authority and many others in the United States and Canada.

#### **How does bargaining work?**

Negotiations begin with current pay and benefits as the baseline. Planners and Designers will identify which issues matter most, including areas that need improvement, and those will become the top priorities for negotiations. Without a negotiated union contract, management can change pay, benefits, and working conditions unilaterally. Executive managers have contracts that outline their salary, bonuses, severance package, and other benefits. *Why should it be any different for professionals? Once a contract is negotiated, no changes will actually take place until they are approved by a vote of the Planners and Designers.*

#### **How does the union work?**

ESC Local 20 is a democracy. ESC Local 20 members have a voice in everything from electing rank and file union leaders like shop stewards, bargaining team members, and officers to setting bargaining priorities and ratifying union contracts. The staff of the union help the members achieve their collective goals and objectives as professionals, as well as provide more traditional representation when needed.

#### **If we vote to join ESC Local 20 does that mean that I can't go directly to management with an issue?**

You can always talk to your supervisor directly about issues at work but, unfortunately, that does not always get results. When you are represented, you do not have to face the issue alone. You will have the support of fellow union members and professional union staff.



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### What if I have a problem with my manager or supervisor?

Having a fair process to resolve disputes is one of the most significant benefits of being in a union. If you have a disagreement with management, our negotiated dispute resolution procedure moves up through several levels of management before finally going to outside arbitration, if necessary. This means that your managers don't get the final say. We try hard to resolve issues with local managers but the fact that the ultimate level of appeal is to an unbiased arbitrator outside of the company often helps both sides reach agreement.

### What about the benefits we currently have?

Negotiations begin with the wages and benefits you currently have, or the "status quo." Currently, management can make unilateral changes to things like retirement and health benefits with no input from Planners and Designers. Forming a union with ESC Local 20 is about having the ability to negotiate over the important issues that affect your work.

### Will I have to strike if I am part of a union?

We always try to solve disputes in a professional manner. Strikes are very much economic weapons of last resort, and ESC Local 20 has a long-standing record of resolving disputes through collaborative processes such as bargaining.

Under any circumstance, a strike can only occur if an overwhelming majority of the members affected vote to approve a strike. No one can force you to strike; that is a decision made by you and your co-workers.

### How much are union dues? What do union dues pay for?

Union dues are used to benefit the members of the Union. To have a professional union that represents professional employees, we need resources to advance the goals of members and to enforce the contract. Having a union office and experienced union staff and attorneys requires such resources. If the employer violates the contract, the Union will use these resources to protect your rights.

Dues are 1 hour of base pay, excluding overtime and bonuses, **per month** for part time employees who work less than 20 hours per week. For employees who average more than 20 hours per week, dues are 1.5 hours of base pay excluding overtime and bonuses **per month**. For example, a full-time worker earning \$40 per hour pays \$60 per month in dues. A part time worker earning the same amount pays \$40 per month. You only pay dues after you and your co-workers have voted to approve your union contract. *So, in other words, you would know what wages and benefits you will be getting in the union contract before you pay a cent in union dues.*

### Am I allowed to talk to about the Union or to union staff at work? Is my manager allowed to talk to me about it?

Yes, you have a right to talk about the union at work just as you could talk about the last movie you saw or what was for dinner last night. You also have the right to communicate with union representatives if it does not interfere with your work time. Management is prohibited from asking you about your union support or activities in a manner that discourages you from engaging in that union activity.

*The decision of whether you should join a union is yours alone to make and is not subject to threats or intimidation by your manager or director. If you feel such threats taking place, contact Jonathan Wright at [JWright@IFTPE20.org](mailto:JWright@IFTPE20.org)*