



# The Edison Planning United Newsletter

11-15-19



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**WHAT WILL THIS CONTRACT LOOK LIKE? WHAT TERMS WILL BE INCLUDED AND WHICH ISSUES WILL BE ADDRESSED?**

*The single most-important takeaway from these types of questions is that we will NOT negotiate for less than what we have now. Period.*

Contract negotiations will start with what we have now as the foundation and work to gain improvements based on our current conditions.

Let's emphasize this point again: *there is no way we're going to collectively vote to approve a contract that gets us less than we have now.* That's common sense.

We receive a lot of very specific questions about whether or not certain issues will be addressed or corrected in a union contract with Edison. Answers to some of these questions just aren't possible due to the fact that the contract hasn't been written. However, we have several factors working in our favor:

- Our current conditions of employment - wages, benefits, training, hours of work, work location, etc, become locked in place once we vote to be represented by ESC. Any changes to the status quo must be mutually agreed upon by both parties. This is called the "maintenance of status quo" and it's a legal doctrine that ensures we begin negotiations with what we have now rather than from scratch. It means we will only agree to changes that are for the better, not worse.
- We can use the contract ESC has with PG&E as a template in constructing our own. It makes no sense to reinvent the wheel. We will work to create a contract that will be tailored to us specifically. This FAQ will refer to the ESC/PG&E contract often because this is something concrete we can compare ourselves to because it includes professionals who do the same work as designers and planners.
- SCE is already a unionized company. IBEW 47 and SCE have been negotiating for years and have a good working relationship.
- Utility worker collective bargaining agreements tend to follow similar formats. The [ESC contract with PG&E](#) has a similar appearance to the IBEW 47 contract with SCE. The content is different, because the jobs represented are different, but the framework and major points are similar.
- SCE is legally required to bargain with us in good faith. There are negative consequences for employers who refuse to negotiate with their unionized employees.

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**IF 50% +1 OF THE BARGAINING UNIT SIGNS A CARD, WILL THERE BE A VOTE? OR WILL WE JUST AUTOMATICALLY BE REPRESENTED WITH NO SAY IN THE MATTER?**

*While this is technically possible, the chances of this happening are virtually zero.* The barrier here is that Edison would have to [voluntarily agree](#) to recognize us as a union for this to occur.

Given that management consistently reminds us that they would prefer we not unionize, it is obvious that the company is not going to voluntarily recognize a union. The reality is that this we will have another election in the near future.

ESC Local 20 has a long history of organizing new members. This experience has taught ESC that best the way to successfully add new groups is to file for an election when a supermajority of eligible workers sign an [authorization card](#) and pledges to vote 'yes' to be represented by ESC. This ensures the bargaining unit is well-informed and unified, and that when it comes time to vote, it will pass. Coming from a position of unity and strength means a world of difference in negotiations and the quality of the final contract.

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**DOES BEING REPRESENTED MEAN I WILL LOSE MY SALARIED STATUS AND BE FORCED TO BECOME HOURLY?**

*No.* If you are currently a salaried employee, you will remain salaried after we form a union. Nothing about organizing will automatically change your exempt or non-exempt status. Edison management have perpetuated the myth that unionized workers must all become hourly, which is simply not true.

The truth is that Edison could reclassify salaried planners as hourly at any time. The only way to ensure you remain salaried is via the protections afforded to us in the status quo period, and then via the collective bargaining agreement.

ESC Local 20 represents thousands of salaried employees who were salaried employees before they organized and remained salaried after they became union.

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**WILL SENIORITY BE THE ONLY WAY TO PROMOTE IF WE BECOME UNION?**

*Not at all.* As a union of professionals, ESC actively works to promote the highest standards. Promotion by merit rather than seniority is the way the PG&E/ESC contract works now, and we would bargain for the same professional standards. Nobody wants seniority-based promotion, especially not the professionals that make up the planning department. We all want to protect the integrity of the profession.

ESC is not a trade union and the way hiring works through IBEW Local 47 is not how a union of planners and designers would work. Hiring based on qualifications and merit will remain the norm--no one wants to change this. PG&E employees attempting to get jobs at Edison would still be considered external hires.

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**A 9/80 COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULE IS CURRENTLY BEING CONSIDERED BY MANAGEMENT. WILL WE LOSE THAT BY VOTING FOR THE UNION?**

*The simple answer is no.* The longer answer is that during negotiations, all of our current employment terms will be used as a baseline from which we will negotiate to increase our benefits, working conditions, and terms of employment.

If the 9/80 schedule were to be implemented before we negotiated a contract, it would be included in the status quo and would not change. If the 9/80 schedule was not in effect at the time we win representation, we could then include it as a part of our negotiations.

Currently the 9/80 schedule is being used as a tool to sway us to not vote union, but the fact of the matter is the company can implement it today and is choosing not to. Whatever the company chooses, we the employees can include a 9/80 compressed work schedule in our negotiations.

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### **CAN I BE DISCIPLINED FOR USING WORK EMAIL/SKYPE/MY WORK PHONE TO COMMUNICATE ABOUT UNIONIZATION?**

No. We have every right to view the [ESC Local 20 website](#) or other websites such as the [AFL-CIO](#), [National Labor Relations Board](#), or [IFPTE](#) at work, provided doing so does not interfere with our work obligations.

If we are allowed to Skype about the football game last night or shop on Amazon while at work, we are absolutely allowed to educate ourselves about becoming part of a union of professionals while at work.

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### **WHAT ARE THE UNION DUES, AND WHAT DO I GET FOR THE MONEY?**

ESC Local 20 dues are [1.5 hours of base pay per month](#), which equates to 0.865%. These are some of the lowest dues of any union, anywhere. Dues are set by the membership of ESC Local 20 and have not changed in many years.

Example: if you make \$40/hr, union dues are \$60/month or \$720 annually.

If you just winced at that number, consider this: ESC dues average out to under \$14 per week. How much do you spend every week on eating out for lunch? Lattes? A date night? Do any of those things pay for themselves?

*ESC union dues pay for themselves, because union dues are an investment in your career.*

For the past five years, inflation in California has hovered around 3-4% annually. If you haven't been consistently receiving a minimum 3% raise for each year you have been employed at SCE, you are effectively making the same or less than you did when you first started. Is it right for you to lose money by staying in your job when every single year your industry-specific experience makes you more valuable? No. Of course not.

experience makes you more valuable than ever before now.

Here's the alternative: PG&E's contract not only includes [annual wage](#) increases to reward competency and experience (like our annual merit-based raises), it also guarantees a separate cost of living wage increase every year. This is called a general wage increase, or GWI. Their GWI raise rate is currently at 3% annually. This allows PG&E planners and engineers to not only beat the rate of inflation, but to move up in their pay brackets via their other pay raises, reflecting the ever-increasing value of their work and knowledge. This means that the same \$40/hr employee at PG&E, after a GWI raise, will earn an additional \$2,496 pre-tax and will *also* receive negotiated annual wage increases on top of that. \$720 in annual dues is an investment to earn more than triple your dues in income.

Greg Langan, a long-time PG&E protection engineer represented by ESC, wrote in our [recent newsletter](#): "I know, without a doubt, that if protection engineering had remained unrepresented by ESC, my pay would be at a minimum 20% less than what it is now, which is a net gain of at least 19.135% each year. That's more than a 2000% annual return on my union dues."

Here's a short list of additional benefits your dues will provide for you:

- Benefits and compensation in writing which can only be changed via negotiation and agreement.
- No more sudden unilateral changes, like losing pensions, vacation, bankable sick time, or Op-Min.
- Legal representation in the case of a dispute with supervision, HR, or management.
- Having a say in staffing, workload, and overtime.
- Clearly outlined and defined job duties and responsibilities--no more knee-jerk reactions from management. Any additional workload will have to be negotiated and agreed upon by us, the union members.
- Essential support for our work--for example, when PG&E recently began requiring an AutoCAD certificate to qualify for certain jobs, ESC discovered there were no testing centers available in PG&E territory to administer the test for the cert. To support their members and make sure they could get and retain their jobs, ESC obtained the necessary qualifications to become an official testing center for AutoCAD certification.

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**[Sign the ESC Local 20 Authorization Card!](#)**

**Already signed? Ask your coworkers to sign today!**

**<https://www.joinlocal20.org/edison/edison-authorization-card/>**

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We want each and every Planner and Designer to be informed. If you need help talking with your coworkers or want to join the organizing effort, please contact your ESC organizer:

Desert and Rurals: Jerome Christensen [jchristensen@ifpte20.org](mailto:jchristensen@ifpte20.org)

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