



# The Edison Planning United Newsletter

11-4-19

## My Unionizing Experience





Written by Greg Langan, Sr. Consulting Protection Engineer at PG&E on 10/30/2019

*Edited by Rachael Gates, Norman Schisler, and Jonathan Wright*

Dear Edison Designers and Planners

I am a Senior Consulting Protection Engineer with Pacific Gas and Electric Company. I would like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about the issues that led the Protection Engineering Group to organize in February of 2008, and provide some insight into what it is like after having unionized with ESC.

There were numerous reasons that led the Engineering Protection Group to organize, but they can all be summed up into one of three categories:

1. Punitive pay practices
2. Subjective review process
3. Additional responsibilities without recourse

The punitive pay practice was the intent and practice of management to never let an employee get paid above the middle of the pay band for their classification. In my case, I was recruited by PG&E from another utility to be a Senior Protection Engineer in Sacramento. I negotiated a rate of pay that was 120% of the pay band rate for PG&E senior engineers. Over the next five years my performance ratings were all 1's and 2+'s (1 being the highest and 5 being the lowest).

With these excellent performance marks, one would expect my pay to be at the top if not higher than the middle of the pay band for my classification, but that was not the case. Instead it was in the middle of the band because the company was moving the pay bands to entice outside hires but only giving the current PG&E employees 2-3% raises for high performance. The company would move the pay bands but not move the people within the bands.

I asked a fellow 30-year Senior Protection Engineer what he was currently earning. After adjusting for inflation, I discovered his base pay was less than 5% higher than his entry-level pay from 30 years ago, when he was hired as an associate engineer straight out of college.

Being represented by ESC has ensured that I will progress to the top of my pay band via negotiated increases that recognize the value of my experience, and that my pay band will

move with inflation in addition to the negotiated increases. To get this benefit, I pay 1.5 hours of my base pay per month to ESC in union dues, which equates to 0.865% of my pay. These are the lowest dues I have ever heard of. 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.

And for the record - we were salaried employees before we joined ESC. We are still salaried, as are thousands of other ESC members at PG&E and other employers.

The subjective review process is still in place for management and other unrepresented employees. It ranks employees against each other and requires a certain number of employees be rated in the "lower L" (SCE note: equivalent to a lower level of our E/C/NI) regardless of how well all the employees in a department or classification perform that year. When I came to protection engineering, my group always had to have at least one person with a low rating. Most years, there were no under-performers, so our manager would just "rotate" the bad rating. This is the famous "forced ranking system" and our ESC agreements have ended this practice in our group.

Before ESC, you would have to be the best performer to even be considered for a reasonable raise which just might be high enough to match the rate of inflation. This led to people not training each other and not looking out for each other because you would have to be better than everyone else in order to receive a better rating.

Now that we are proud members of the ESC and the subjective review process is gone, we strive to make our group the best we can be by training each other as much as possible and looking out for one another to minimize any mistakes. Being able to train up the other protection engineers has made my job a lot easier because now there are several people who can do the difficult jobs, not just me.

ESC has allowed the Protection Engineering Group to become true professionals. There is no longer a conflict with hoarding information and not training each other. It has given us a voice - the ability to speak up truthfully without the fear of retaliation. We now have protections guaranteed by our contract, including due process and a grievance process.

In the past, my colleagues were asked by managers and directors in meetings to provide honest feedback on the topic of the day. One engineer I know gave honest feedback in one of these meetings and within a week was disciplined. The director did not like what he heard because it didn't support the ideas management presented. The employee had to take the discipline because there was no recourse for unrepresented employees. It resulted in a bad rating and not getting a raise that year for doing what he was directed to do. This is like asking your dog to fetch you a newspaper and then beating the dog with the same newspaper after it has done exactly what you asked of it. As an ESC member, I have a grievance process that will

has done exactly what you asked of it. As an ESC member, I have a grievance process that will remedy unjust discipline and can protect against unfair termination.

Additional responsibility without recourse was the norm when my department was unrepresented. Hardly a week went by without our managers having a knee-jerk reaction to a situation, which resulted in said managers taking responsibility from other groups and holding protection engineering accountable for it. This additional responsibility didn't come with an increase in pay for the additional work nor additional resources such as more employees to handle the increased workload. The group that gave up the responsibility didn't lose any employees or pay but we had to do more work with less people and limited resources to make up for their mistakes. Work, mind you, that we were never trained in. This resulted in lower performance ratings and weaker raises for the whole group.

As an ESC member, my responsibilities which I am held accountable for have been negotiated and defined by contract in my job description. Any proposed changes to my responsibilities must be agreed upon by both the membership of ESC and the company. This has put a stop to the knee-jerk decisions made by management and has allowed me to develop my skills in my discipline and become the professional that I have always strived to be and am today.

Looking back, I have received a lot more from being an ESC member than I had ever thought possible. ESC has made PG&E a place where I can spend the rest of my career. I hope my experiences that I have shared with you will help in your decision.

Thank you,

**Greg Langan, PE | Sr. Consulting Protection Engineer**

Pacific Gas & Electric Company

850 Stillwater Rd, Room 1014C

West Sacramento, CA 95605

Email: [gald@pge.com](mailto:gald@pge.com)

External: (916) 760-3630

---

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

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

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

---

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)

Orange: Jonathan Wright [jwright@ifpte20.org](mailto:jwright@ifpte20.org)

Metro East: Liz Sparks [esparks@ifpte.org](mailto:esparks@ifpte.org)

Metro West, North Coast, and San Joaquin: Oraiu Amoni [oamoni@ifpte20.org](mailto:oamoni@ifpte20.org)

---

**Get updates and lots of great information by**

**following us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)!**

Engineers and Scientists of California, Local 20 IFPTE

[ifpte20.org](http://ifpte20.org) | [joinlocal20.org](http://joinlocal20.org)