

Legislation Report – May 11, 2009

On April 21, 2009 I was asked to attend a meeting at the IUOE Hall with members of the Union. They are in the process of “benchmarking”, which means they are trying to determine which duties each position has within their Union. It is always a great idea to clarify responsibilities for the sake of safety.

Issues arose at the West Coast General Hospital in Port Alberni concerning the line separating duties between the electrician and the Power Engineer. With the assistance of the Electrical Safety Manager, Mr. Stephen Hinde, they were able to sort through them and produce a Memorandum of Understanding. This document is written by the Chief Engineer with the assistance of Mr. Hinde and clearly describes the demarcation of duties.

An example would be the first bullet describing parts under the jurisdiction/responsibility of the Chief Engineer, which says, “Boilers B-A1, B-A2, B-A3 and B-A4, and electrical systems back to point of closest disconnect.” Several subsequent bullets include, “and associated electrical systems back to point of closest disconnect.” This is an excellent clarifying document in my opinion, supported by the Electrical Safety Manager. Unfortunately, other hospitals are being told by the BCSA that this understanding is for West Coast General Hospital only.

At our General Meeting in May 2004, we presented the Boiler Safety Manager with a document recommending changes to Section 21 of the regulation, as well as many other recommendations. Seven changes to the regulation were made within weeks of presenting this document. They are documented in my Legislation Committee Report – January 2008, available online at www.ipevancouver.ca.

Recognizing our discomfort with Section 21 of the regulation, when the Boiler Technology Committee was formed the following year, Malcolm Bishop, the Boiler Safety Manager, asked me to lead an ad hoc committee to deal with Section 21 and 22 of the regulation. On April 6, 2006 a Recommendation For Change concerning Section 21 was approved unanimously by the Boiler Technology Committee and forwarded to the BCSA. It read, “The holder of a valid power engineer’s certificate, 4th class or higher, without requiring any additional authorization, may perform regulated work on electrical equipment from the supply disconnect to all the electrical components of a plant.”

In the history of the Boiler Technology Committee, which is now 5 years old, no Recommendation For Change from the Committee, even if it was unanimously approved has been adopted by the BC Safety Authority.

The official response to the Recommendation For Change on Section 21 and 22 is documented in the June 20, 2008 minutes of the Boiler Technology Committee, where it says “Chief Engineer of plant to define ancillary equipment.” At the end of our last Boiler Technology Committee meeting I asked the Boiler Safety Manager how the Chief Engineers in B.C. know that they are responsible for this definition. He said he will get back to me.

The meeting at the IUOE hall in April clearly shows that there is confusion in the field about the separation of responsibilities between Power Engineers and the FSR electrician. Further requests for clarification have come in. I will bring this matter up again at the Boiler Technology Committee.