

# POWER SOURCE

Summer 2004

The official newsletter of the Northeastern Illinois Labor Management Cooperative Committee

## NECA & IBEW Help Revitalize Waukegan

Hometown hero, Jack Benny isn't here to draw the crowds he once did, and downtown Waukegan, Illinois isn't exactly known as a bustling tourist hub these days either. But the latter could change come October after the grand re-opening of the historical Genesee Theatre. And although, sadly, the comedic genius Jack Benny won't be available for booking, theatergoers are predicted to turn out in droves to experience Northeastern Illinois' newest attraction.

In 2001, Waukegan City Council gave the go-ahead on a \$24 million renovation project to transform the modest 1,800-seat movie palace into a 115,000 square-foot state-of-the-art entertainment complex consisting ultimately of two theatres, expanded lobbies, seating, concession areas, and washroom facilities, as well as plush corporate suites; construction has been underway ever since.

With high expectations and civic pride on the line, the city turned to NECA contractor Kelso-Burnett Company and a group of 20 IBEW Local 150 electricians for the electrical design and installation. The team of skilled electricians installed a 3,000-amp electrical service for all of the power requirements throughout the entire theatre, including the advanced lighting and state-of-the-art sound system. NECA contractor Contech Company was responsible for the design



*First constructed in 1927, the historic Genesee Theatre is scheduled to re-open its doors this October. IBEW local 150 electricians completed the electrical construction for the \$24 million renovation project.*

and installation of the fire alarm system as well as the sound system for the stage.

The theatre is a masterpiece in itself; however, most of its electrical workmanship will not be visible to the general public. The fifth floor of the building houses a massive HVAC system that uses 1,200 amps of the total electrical service. Equally impressive is the 30,000-plus feet of conduit that twists and turns artistically throughout the complex. And although the skilled electricians have handled the project masterfully, they'll be the first to tell you that historical renovation is not an easy task.

"The main challenge has been retrofitting the new electrical work into the existing building without damaging the historical craftsmanship in the process," said Bruce McKinney, Project Foreman for Kelso-Burnett. "The original ceiling is ornate plaster and there are masonry walls. We've had to remain extremely concentrated when working in these historically significant areas."

While the complex electrical wiring is behind the scenes, there will be ample opportunity for patrons to marvel at its brilliance just by observing the dazzling light fixtures throughout the building.

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## *NECA & IBEW Help Revitalize Waukegan*

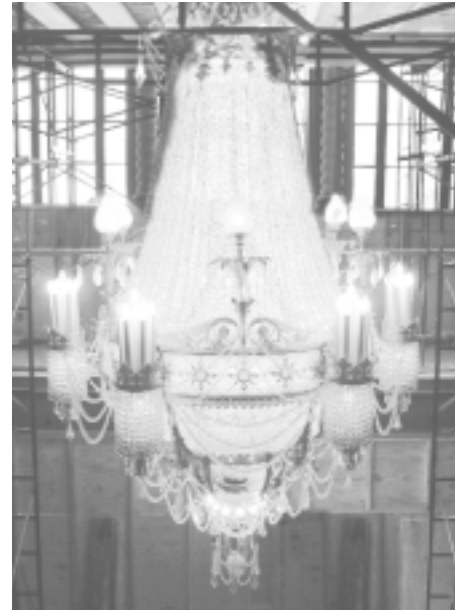


*Over 30,000 feet of electrical conduit has been retrofitted throughout the entire 115,000 square foot complex.*

Around 200 have been purchased or donated from 12 different theatres across the country, totaling \$1.2 million in chandelier costs. And the grandest of all is already hanging in the front lobby. From the Seattle Orpheum Theatre, the gold-plated French Baccarat Crystal Chandelier is as old as the Genesee and arguably the finest in the country, appraised at \$350,000.

"The Grand Chandelier was hung very early in the construction process to set the mood," said Steve Kolber, Architect and Executive Director of the Genesee Theatre. "We wanted to build the excitement surrounding this project and inspire not only the public, but all of the trades who are here every day working to make this happen. The electrical work by Northeastern Illinois NECA and IBEW Local 150 has been exceptional. There aren't a lot of buildings like this left, so they are taking great pride in this tremendous opportunity."

If the enthusiasm of NECA and IBEW is any indication of future successes, the completed Genesee Theatre shouldn't have a problem meeting its lofty expectations. Although the original 1927 ticket price of 60¢ is likely to increase slightly, patrons will be treated to everything from nationally known entertainment like Broadway musicals and classic films, to special event concerts and local community productions, in a state-of-the-art theatrical



*At 18 feet tall and 8 1/2 feet wide, the "Grand Chandelier" proudly hangs in the Genesee Theatre lobby.*

facility. The Theatre is designed, in Steve Kolber's words, to "handle any type of show they can throw at us."

"Northeastern Illinois NECA and IBEW Local 150 are proud to have a hand in a project of such historical relevance," said Dave Barger, Business Manager of IBEW Local 150. "This is a promising investment for the city of Waukegan and its impact will be felt throughout the entire Northeastern Illinois community."

Known as the midpoint between Chicago and Milwaukee, it only seems logical that Waukegan finally boasts a tourist attraction of its own. It appears as if the revamped Genesee Theatre is the missing link to an economic boom in what was once a quaint northeastern Illinois suburb.

Across the street from the Theatre's entrance, a larger-than-life statue of Waukegan's favorite son looks on in approval. The late Jack Benny would be proud. ■



*IBEW Local 150 electrician Jeff Wicklander works in the backstage area of the Genesee Theatre. The newly expanded auditorium behind him will seat 2,500 people when finished.*

## Northeastern Illinois NECA and IBEW Members Roll to Perfection

Perfection doesn't visit the bowling alley very often. But for two Northeastern Illinois NECA and IBEW members, lightning struck twice within twenty-four hours.

On April 7, 2004, Jim Morley of IBEW Local 150 bowled a 300 game at Raymond's Johnsborg Lanes. Not to be outdone, the very next day Darrell Michael of IBEW Local 461 rolled twelve consecutive strikes to capture a perfect game of his own at the Idle Hour Lanes in Sandwich, Illinois.

For Jim Morley, this is his second brush with greatness. In October of 2002 he bowled his first 300 game. And now, just two years later, he's achieved the ultimate prize once again – an accomplishment that seems even more impressive when considering he's only been bowling competitively for 11 years.

Perhaps a bittersweet 299 bowled two years ago drove Darrell Michael to finally capture that elusive perfect game. Given Darrell's intense study of lane



*IBEW Local 461 electrician Darrell Michael (left) shows off his 300 game hardware, while IBEW Local 150 electrician Jim Morley (right) demonstrates his "perfect" stance.*

conditions and repeated Thursday competition for the past 25 years, one might have predicted this special night.

With a combined 68 years of experience in their respective union locals, the hard work and dedication of Jim Morley and Darrell Michael in the electrical field apparently translate to their sports and social endeavors as well. Jim is currently working for Terrance Electric and Darrell is employed at Cipher Electric. Both are second generation electricians.



Northeastern Illinois NECA and IBEW congratulate Jim and Darrell on their perfect performances. ■



*IBEW Local 150 electrician Jim Morley proudly displays his second 300 game ring.*

## Alternative Energy will Alter Lifestyles

Picture yourself a few years from now cruising down the open road in a brand new car. You notice your fuel gauge is on empty and you think to yourself, "I better stop for hydrogen."

Hydrogen?

It may sound strange today, but in the not-too-distant future, an advanced energy-saving technology called fuel cells will change the way we live. It will power our homes, vehicles, and office buildings, reduce our reliance on imported oil, and protect the environment.

As leaders in the electrical industry, it is imperative that IBEW and Northeastern Illinois NECA electricians and contractors understand the importance and impending uses of future technologies like fuel cells.

Serving as an electrochemical conversion device, a fuel cell converts hydrogen and oxygen into water, generating electricity and heat in the process. It operates similarly to a battery that can be recharged while in use; however, a fuel cell uses hydrogen and oxygen to

recharge instead of electricity. The result is an energy efficient fuel with zero emissions and low noise levels.

While a crowded but silent expressway is a difficult concept to grasp, it is inevitable according to industry experts. In fact, fuel cell technology is already being used in certain areas of everyday life. Fuel-cell-powered buses are running in several cities. And today's space shuttles use fuel cells to supply electrical power onboard as well as hydrogen fuel in the main engines during take-off.

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## Alternative Energy will Alter Lifestyles

Space shuttles and buses were among the first applications of the technology because, initially, fuel cells needed to be quite large to produce the required power. Scientists have since created smaller fuel cells with increased power density, allowing cars and everyday appliances to also receive the technology.

The main challenge facing researchers today is exactly how to change a society reliant on an oil-based (gasoline, natural gas) infrastructure to one based on hydrogen. One solution is a device called a reformer, which turns existing fuels into hydrogen and then feeds it to the fuel cell. Unfortunately, the hydrogen that comes from reformers is not pure,

which lowers the efficiency of the fuel cell. Additionally, the current price of fuel cells is too high to gain commercial support for use in vehicles, homes, and businesses.

Despite these obstacles, the shift to a hydrogen economy is bound to happen. Historically, our energy supplies have evolved from coal to oil to natural gas. And the next logical step is the cleanest burning fuel of all – hydrogen. Soon everything from hearing aids to automobiles will be powered by fuel cells, and NECA and IBEW contractors and electricians will be depended upon to install and maintain this emerging technology.

So the next time you find yourself pulled over at a gas station, take a brief moment to reflect. You may be standing on a historical site. Just as today's generations view coal as an ancient fuel source, future generations will wonder how we could pump such a damaging pollutant as natural gas into the environment.

But, hydrogen?

Yes. And it's coming soon to a filling station, home appliance, and office building near you. ■

*International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local Unions 117, 150, and 461  
National Electrical Contractors Association of Northeastern Illinois*

800-332-LMCC • [lmcc-nei.com](http://lmcc-nei.com)

UNION BUG

Crystal Lake, IL 60014  
Suite 135  
765 Munshaw Lane

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS LMCC

NECA IBEW  
Northeastern Illinois Local 117, 150, and 461

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