

Indiana Gas, unions negotiate contract that's companywide

In a move Indiana Gas is calling unprecedented and a display of real teamwork, its two unions have ratified one companywide contract that will cover a single bargaining unit represented by both unions.

The single contract, which will be in effect for two years, was accepted by members of both unions.

Last July, Indiana Gas approached the leadership of both the United Steelworkers of America, Local 12213, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 1393, asking them to help the company find a solution to problems created by trying to operate under two different sets of work rules and geographic boundaries.

"More than 525 of our 1,140 employees are represented by either the IBEW or the Steelworkers. There were major differences between the two contracts, such as work schedules and geographic restrictions of work locations," said Vice President of Human Resources Kenneth J. Roberts.

"We have made some major changes in the company's field

organization in the last few months that now require the existence of a single bargaining unit. Two contracts made that difficult and did not allow us the flexibility to operate efficiently throughout our rapidly growing service territory."

"Indiana Gas is making changes in its organizational structure in response to many changes taking place in the gas industry," said Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Robert D. Stegner.

"Competition has become a major factor and it is vital Indiana Gas operate even more efficiently to continue reliable gas service to customers at a competitive price. A primary part of operating efficiently is being able to place employees where they are most needed."

"Making one companywide contract a reality was really a monumental undertaking for the two unions and for Indiana Gas," Roberts said. "And the teamwork and cooperation all parties displayed on such a complex issue is unprecedented, not only at Indiana Gas, but also in our industry."

"Together, we have found an innovative solution to the company's problem — without the invention of a third party such as the National Labor Relations Board. This shows a great willingness on the part of the bargaining unit employees to help the company remain competitive, efficient and productive."

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