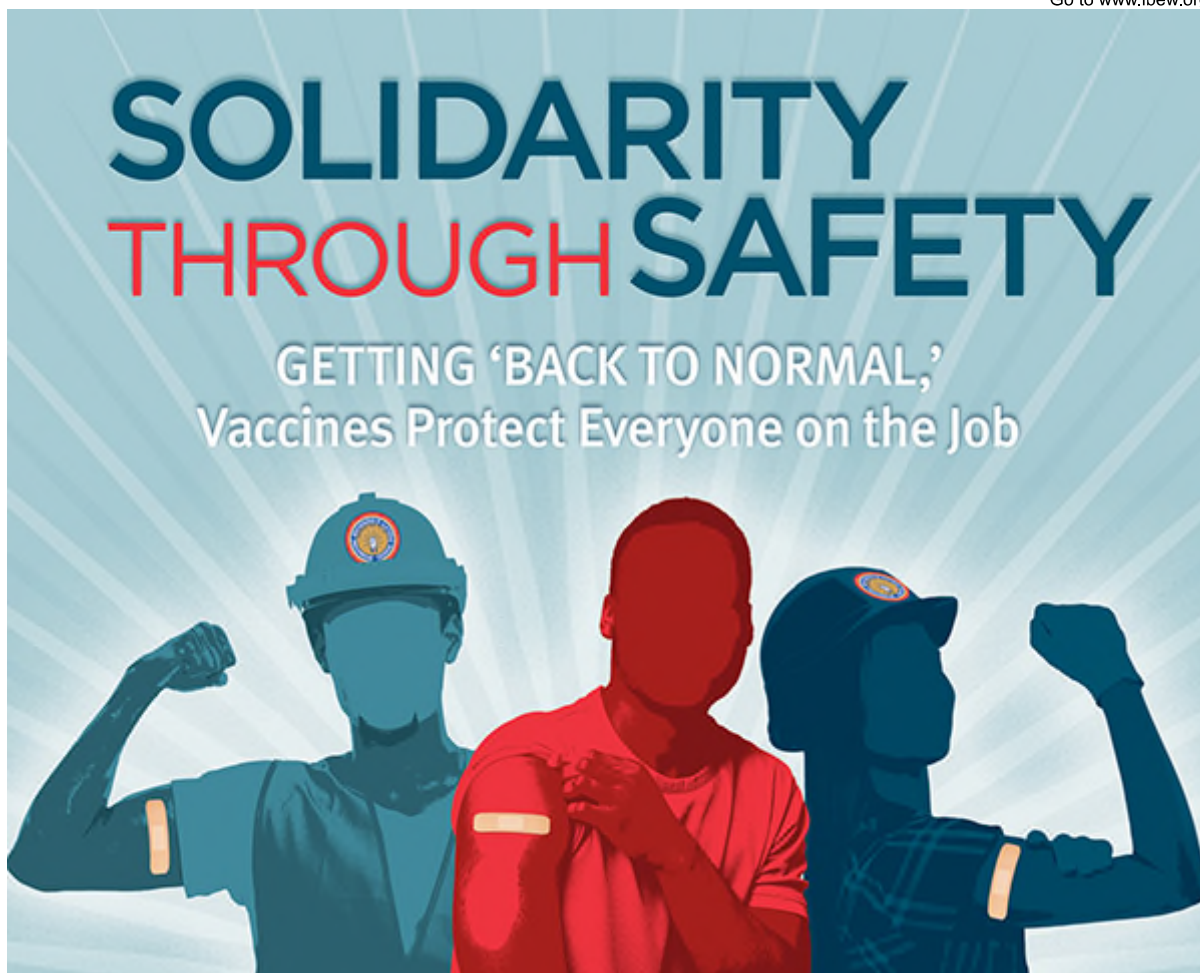


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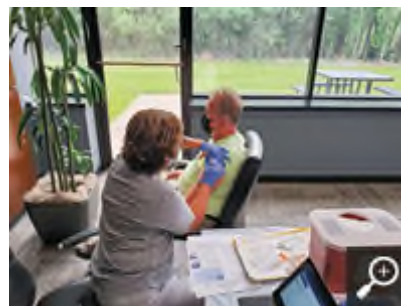


The COVID-19 vaccine is a modern medical miracle, the result of a decade of American-led research into mRNA vaccines and a half decade of research into SARS and coronaviruses. Its rollout was a bipartisan triumph, developed under a Republican president, distributed under a Democrat, and nearly every dose used in the United States was developed and produced in a facility built and maintained by the IBEW.

At the beginning of September, nearly 180 million Americans had received full doses of the vaccine, and the evidence is clear that they work far better than even the most optimistic of epidemiologists had predicted. In August, the FDA gave full approval to the Pfizer vaccine for people over the age of 16 and was expected to follow course with the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines in short order.

Side effects have been mild and rare and breakthrough infections even rarer. And when a vaccinated person is infected, the course of the disease is far less severe than when it is allowed to run its natural course.

"These vaccines are one of the greatest scientific triumphs since America landed the Apollo missions on the moon," said International President Lonnie R. Stephenson. "I could not be prouder of the IBEW's involvement in bringing them to the world."



Milwaukee Local 494 ran a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at its hall on June 3 (pictured). The shots, which were available to all community members, were provided by the Milwaukee Health Department and no appointment was needed, making them as accessible as possible. "We are excited to do our part to get our community vaccinated against COVID-19," said Business Manager Dean Warsh. "Together, we will crush COVID."

To interrupt the spread of the virus, 80-85% of the population must be vaccinated. As of late summer, that number had stalled at only about 50%. For many reasons, some more scientifically grounded than others, a significant portion of the population hasn't been vaccinated, including some of our IBEW members. According to a Carnegie Mellon study published in August, construction workers had the lowest vaccination rate of all occupations.

That has to change.

"I have been telling people — and this is a charged deal, I know — if you don't have a real health or religious reason by the end of this year, if you don't have the vaccine, you will not have any place to work," said Orlando, Fla., Local 606 Business Manager Clay McNeely.

The largest employer in his jurisdiction, Disney, announced an agreement with service unions representing nearly 40,000 workers that will require vaccinations. It isn't hard to predict what is next.

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"They haven't imposed a site-wide rule yet, but federal properties are doing it already and I just can't see any other way it will go," he said.

There are many arguments for getting the vaccine, and by now everyone knows them: Personal interest in not getting sick, permanently disabled or even dying; protecting the public good and the people who are not fully protected by a vaccine — the sick, the young and the old; denying the virus a pool of vulnerable people to evolve and mutate in, possibly generating a variant that bypasses the vaccine and puts us back where we were over the winter.

For millions of people in North America, those have been reason enough. Inside this issue, there are testimonials from rank-and-file IBEW members telling the story of their decision to get the vaccine.

Millions of others, however, have no story to tell. Since the beginning of July, Delta variant illnesses have been doubling every week and now, shockingly across the U.S., intensive care units are full again. In nearly every case — 97 out of 100 — the victim is unvaccinated.

"People have often been waiting to see how people respond to the vaccines and what kind of side effects happen. Go ahead and get vaccinated because you've seen that people do very, very well: side effects are mild. They're self-limited. These vaccines are incredibly safe," said Dr. Melanie Swift, co-chair of Mayo Clinic's COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation and Distribution Work Group. "Now is the time for people to get vaccinated. That's really the only way that we're going to stave off what could be a really devastating next wave of this pandemic."

A full-blown third wave is rising and employers, business owners, and school officials cannot picture another season, another year, of an economy in intensive care simply because tens of millions of individuals have shunned the vaccine.

And so, more and more of them are requiring vaccination proof in exchange for continued employment.

Vaccine requirements are little different than any other safety standard, said Director of Construction and Maintenance Mike Richard, like requiring all tools to be safety cabled when working in the air.

"No one cares that you don't know anyone who has dropped a drill, that we work outside and even if you did drop it, it probably wouldn't hit anyone since we're so spread out. Or that you are young and healthy and won't lose your grip on your side cutters, or that only the old and sick need that protection. No one cares," he said. "If you violate a jobsite's safety policies, you're going to be fired. The first time. No questions. Taking these steps to protect your co-workers and IBEW brothers and sisters is no different."

The first employers to require vaccines tended to be government agencies and white collar and service industries. The first and second



Other locals have also run clinics, including San Diego Local 465, which lobbied to get its utility members earlier access to the shots with other essential workers. Chicago Local 134 ran a clinic in April in partnership with the University of Chicago Medicine. Open to all members, the clinic administered just over 500 shots. And in June, Chester, Pa., Local 654 held a clinic for members and public safety workers in concert with the Delaware County Fraternal Order of Police. Participants were also entered in a raffle to win prizes, including \$1,000.

Why I Got My Shot



Andy LeDoux

Omaha, Neb., Local 22

"I'd just gotten over a serious respiratory illness that left me coughing so bad I broke a rib, so getting vaccinated was a no-brainer. And I've got twin 12-year-old daughters. I did it for them. And now we can travel."



Brook Larson

Minneapolis Local 292

"I did it so I can be around for my mom and dog, who count on me."

largest employers in the U.S., the government and Walmart, are requiring vaccination as are most major financial institutions, airlines and retail stores.

Companies can unilaterally impose vaccine mandates, nearly any mandate at all, on the 9 out of 10 workers working without a collective bargaining agreement. The Supreme Court case allowing a state mandate is more than a century old, but federal appeals courts upheld vaccine mandates for firefighters and Indiana University students in the last year.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission issued a guidance in May reaffirming employer mandates are legal if they include medical exemptions required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and religious exceptions as required by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

It's similar to drug testing, Richard said. Even though companies could require it, it felt invasive to many members when it was first rolled out. But it was also welcomed by many members who were concerned for their own safety and the safety of their brothers and sisters.

Richard said the IBEW has been down this road before with flu vaccine mandates for hospital work, mandatory safety classes for work at "Big 3" auto plants, background checks for nuclear outage or data center work and near-universal drug testing.

"I was on the first drug-tested job for my home local in Detroit back when I was an apprentice. Now 90% of all work requires it. If you want to turn down any jobs with a mandate you won't get many opportunities to work," he said. "And the requirement will be the same for union and nonunion."

However, employers don't get to have it all their own way. Policy and procedures for a vaccine mandate are subject to negotiation with union representatives and discipline and termination decisions are subject to grievance.

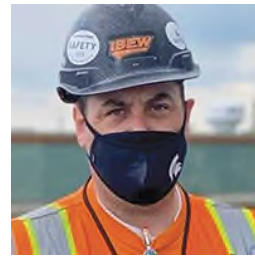
"Drug testing was bumpy, it was. We did get some folks reinstated because the process they imposed was flawed, but that stopped once management began treating us like a partner in the process," McNeely said. "This could be a whole lot smoother."

Stephenson is encouraging all IBEW leaders to begin effects negotiation immediately to ensure members have sufficient time to get the vaccination and support to determine if their concerns rise to the level of a legitimate exemption

"Our job as a brotherhood is to build a future for one another and our families," Stephenson said. "You can't do that if you're not working or, worse, on a ventilator in an ICU or at home hooked to an oxygen tank because you have long COVID."

The goal, Stephenson said, is not to prevent vaccine policies, a fool's errand in any case, but to ensure our high standards for safety, fairness and craftsmanship with employers and customers who choose to require them.

"It's time to do the right thing for our families, for our union sisters and brothers and for our jobs. Nothing about this vaccine is political, and it's time to protect ourselves and get back to normal," Stephenson said.



Mike Smith

Lansing, Mich., Local 665

"I chose to get the COVID-19 vaccine hoping I was doing what was best for my IBEW sisters and brothers, as well as for my family and elderly parents."



Michael Needham

South Bend, Ind., Local 153

"It's important to get vaccinated for your family, your friends and your community. I got my shot to get us back to normal."



Tomas Trujillo III

Albuquerque, N.M., Local 611

"Witnessing the number of people worldwide infected, the limited number of ventilators and ICU beds made my decision very clear — get vaccinated."



Dustin Lopez

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Oklahoma City Local 1141

"I got the vaccine because I didn't want to be responsible for aiding the spread of COVID-19 to my peers and family."



Nick Bathurst

Boise, Idaho, Local 291

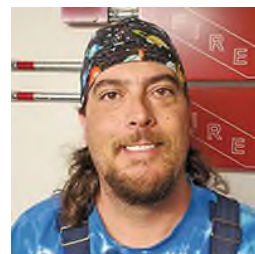
"I got vaccinated because I have an obligation to protect my family, as well as my brothers and sisters on the job. I don't want any of us to be exposed. And I think we're all tired of wearing a mask."



Mike Broaddus

Tangent, Ore., Local 280

"Being vaccinated helps prevent me from getting COVID-19, so I am less likely to spread the disease to others — especially the vulnerable population. Additionally, it stops me from being sick and missing work."



Nick Shimon

Denver Local 68

"I have family with underlying health conditions and it's super important to be able to be around them without fear of them getting sick. I definitely want to keep my union brothers and sisters safe, too, so we can all stay healthy and

Share

keep working."



Craig Christian

Richmond, Va., Local 666

"I had a friend that died, who I worked with. He was my apprentice at one time. Dennis was 50 years old with three kids. He died before there was a vaccine. So did a close family friend. They didn't have a choice. We do."

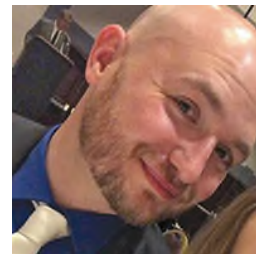
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Heather Brugioni

Wheeling, W. Va., Local 141

"Getting vaccinated was imperative because my 77-year-old deaf and disabled aunt lives with us and I've taught drum lessons for 23 years. I have an obligation to protect my aunt and the children I teach."



Jarrod Amberik

Cleveland Local 38

"I got vaccinated for those who can't. It wasn't a hard decision to put other people ahead of myself like the elderly and immunocompromised who can't get the shot."

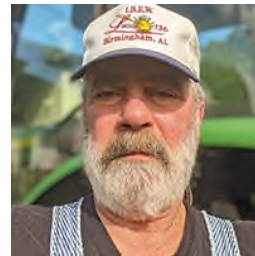
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Brian McMurry

Gulfport, Miss., Local 903

"I was diagnosed with COVID-19 but I stayed out of the hospital and had a pretty quick recovery. That probably would not have been the case if I had not got the vaccine. If you have the vaccine, even if you do catch it, it can lessen the effects."



Eddie Parker

Birmingham, Ala., Local 136

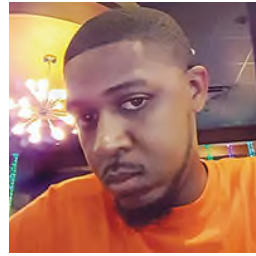
"I lost my father to COVID-19 in February. He was 83, but I was baling hay with him just last year, so he was in pretty good shape. Now that it's approved, why not just get the vaccine? I believe the scientists. I got vaccinated to get us back to normal."



Travas Givens

Little Rock, Ark., Local 295

"I was one of the guys that was hesitant about the shot. But one of the kids I've coached — he's 20 now — wasn't vaccinated and got COVID. He's been unresponsive on a ventilator for months. That right there is why I went and got my shot."



Andre Baldwin

Charleston, S.C., Local 766

"I had so many people that told me different things that I was at a point where I didn't want to get the vaccine. But I served in the U.S. Army for eight years and the V.A. started to offer it, so I took a chance even though I was a little nervous about it. I'm happy I got it."

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IBEW and NECA Joint Letter on Importance of COVID-19 Vaccinations

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact communities all across America. As of today, more than 633,000 Americans have died since the start of the pandemic, with 38.4 million cases overall. This is a staggering loss, greater than the U.S. death totals in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq combined. We are in a war—one of the deadliest wars we have ever seen as an American people.

These numbers are not mere statistics; they represent families and loved ones across our country being torn apart by this deadly disease. We are talking about mothers, daughters, sisters, fathers, brothers, sons, and grandparents. There is a tool we can use to fight this ongoing pandemic, and win this war: The COVID-19 vaccines.

With the FDA approving the Pfizer-BioTech vaccine, we implore each and every person in the electrical construction industry to become vaccinated against COVID-19.

This is about keeping our communities safe. Not only is it our best tool to fight against this pandemic, but because it is the best way to ensure families stay healthy and together: including your family.

Based on statistics from across the country, fully vaccinated people make up as little as 0.1 percent of COVID-19 hospitalizations and as little as 0.2 percent of deaths. Currently, more than 170 million Americans—only 52.3 percent of the population—are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, with 62 percent reporting at least one dose.

We can do better.

There was recently a story of a father in Las Vegas who died from the coronavirus. Shortly before he passed, he sent his fiancée a message: "I should have gotten the damn vaccine." Unfortunately, there have been too many of these stories in recent weeks.

So please, let's all work together, not as an industry but as a community. Think of your own family, your friends, your coworkers and their families—and urge them to receive this vaccination as well. This impacts absolutely everyone, and these vaccines are readily available to you.

Please, if you haven't, go and take the shot. Let's work together and do all we can to end this pandemic and win this war.

Lonnie R. Stephenson
International President,
IBEW

Kenneth Cooper
International Secretary-
Treasurer, IBEW

David Long
Chief Executive Officer,
NECA

Larry Beltramo
President, NECA