Welding and Manganese Poisoning

Exposure to metal fumes from welding, cutting and brazing—especially in confined spaces—can cause brain damage. A major culprit is manganese, a component of all steel and major welding materials. Manganese has been known to cause the degenerative brain disorder known as Parkinsonism since 1837. A recent study found 40 percent of welders showed signs of the disorder. Many physicians are unaware of manganese poisoning or the risks of exposures in steel making and welding as stated on Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS).

Symptoms of manganese poisoning include tremors, shakes, loss of balance, slowed movement, walking problems, impotency, slurred speech, extreme drowsiness or nighttime leg cramps. Because the symptoms are similar, welders may be mistakenly diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease) or MS (multiple sclerosis).

If you have any of these symptoms, go to your doctor as soon as possible. Bring a copy of the MSDS for welding rods and other related materials you commonly use. If you do not have any of these symptoms:

1. OSHA requires employers to use engineering controls such as local exhaust ventilation to control health hazards. Personal protective equipment like respirators may be necessary to supplement other measures. Ask your employer to verify these as appropriate.
2. Obtain a copy of the MSDS for the welding rods you use. Ask your union steward or occupational health provider to ensure your supervisor is aware of manganese fumes and that measures are in place to provide protection. Your employer has an obligation under OSHA to show you a current MSDS for any product you work with.
3. Consider welding only where effective exhaust ventilation is in use. Supplement your protection with a National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health-endorsed respirator. Employers must provide respirators as part of a comprehensive respiratory protection program.

Workers in the trades are often exposed to occupational health risks. Tell your doctor about your job and request a personal health risk evaluation.

MINUTES AND REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING
Chairman Querry called the regular meeting of the International Executive Council to order at 8:00 a.m. Monday, June 2, 2003. Other members of the Council in attendance were: Peter C. Plante, William J. O’Connell, Gary L. McCaffery, Quarry, Cattoliche, Fashion and Labor.

INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT-HILTON.
International President Edith D. Hill met with the International Executive Council a number of times to discuss a variety of matters affecting all branches of the Brotherhood.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY TREASURER-OCONNEOR
International Security-Treasurer Jerry J. O’Connor presented financial reports covering the IBW Pension Fund and the Investment portfolio of the Brotherhood—both in Canada and the United States.

LEGAL DEFENSE
Mr. Donald E. B. Pacheco, legal defense manager, presented the general fund, the rail fund and all related funds.

FINANCIAL REPORTS
Since the last meeting, Treasury-Treasurer’s reports for the various funds of the Brotherhood were presented to the International Executive Council, examined and filed.

PF TRUSTEES
The International Executive Council sitting as the Trustees, along with the International President and International Security-Treasurer of the IBW Pension Fund Board, reviewed Fund investments and related matters.

ENVIREMENTS
The report of the fund investment action by the International President and International Security-Treasurer of the IBW Pension Fund Board were examined and approved.

LOCAL UNION UNDER TRUSTEESHIP
International President Edith D. Hill reported to the International Executive Council that there are no local unions under trusteeship at this time.

RETIREMENT OF INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES, DIRECTORS, AND OFFICERS
The International Council reviewed the following reports for approval and acted accordingly:

RETIREMENT OF INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

William B. Turek—effective May 1, 2003 (International Representative—Railroad District)
Jean Humphrey—effective June 1, 2003 (International Representative—Railroad Department)
Osmo J. Siitonen—effective June 1, 2003 (International Representative—IBW South District)
Gilbert Salone—effective August 1, 2003 (International Representative—IBW North District)

RETIREMENT OF INTERNATIONAL OFFICE DIRECTORS

Robert B. Querry—effective June 15, 2003 (Director—Education Department)
Robert Bade—effective August 1, 2003 (Director—Manufacturing Department)

RETIREMENT OF OFFICE EMPLOYEES

Angelo S. Sinagra—effective June 15, 2003 (I.O. Employee—IBW Journal and Media Department)
Carolyn A. Baker—effective June 15, 2003 (I.O. Employee—IBW Journal and Media Department)
Brenda J. Turner—effective July 14, 2003 (I.O. Employee—IBW Manufacturing Department)
Maggie J. Minniti—effective September 2, 2003 (I.O. Employee—IBW Pension and Death Claims Department)
Brenda J. Brown—effective October 10, 2003 (I.O. Employee—IBW Pension and Death Claims Department)

CHARGES FILED WITH THE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AGAINST PENSIONED UNION MEMBER KEITH A. SCHULZ

Keith A. Schulz, Assistant Business Manager of IBW Local Union 60, San Antonio, Texas filed a charge against Brother Keith A. Schulz for violation of Article X, Section 6(d), of the IBW Constitution. Schulz is employed by Martin Wright Electric Company, a member of the IBW International, as a journeyman electrician. Schulz also serves as the assistant business manager for IBW Local Union 60. There is a dispute between Schulz and the company over the consent of the International Executive Council to conduct a hearing. Schulz was not present at the hearing. The evidence presents that Schulz is not a union member, is not a union member of IBW Local Union 60, and has not been elected by the members of IBW Local Union 60 to serve on the International Executive Council. Therefore, the hearing was held on May 19, 2003, at IBW Local Union 278’s office. Brother Longoria was charged for working for PBF, a non-union employee while being on the pension rolls of the PBF Pension Fund. Brother Miquel Carranco, President of IBW Local Union 278, stated that through a related conversation with Brother Longoria, who is a non-union employee, that Longoria was the owner of Paisano Electric. When interrogated by International Representative Jimmy Stevens, Longoria admitted that he is the sole owner of Paisano Electric. The records show that Longoria is a full-time paid employee, and that he is currently employed full-time in the operation and conduct of the business. An exhibit of 40 pages shows that Longoria has been paid as the employee of Paisano Electric. Therefore, this charge is not warranted.

The Council determined that the charge was not warranted, and that the administrative procedures of the complaint were not followed. Schulz was offered an opportunity to present his defense, which he did.

The next regular meeting of the International Executive Council will commence at 9:00 a.m. Monday, September 15, 2003, in Washington, D.C.