

# Union Ironworkers Raise the Bar with Continuous Training, Competitions, and New OSHA Relationship

*Iron Workers Union reinforces skills development, safety to ensure its ironworkers are ready to meet the construction demands of industry rebound.*

AUSTIN, Texas, July 13 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – While U.S. industries struggle to rebuild, today’s union ironworkers are preparing to lead the next wave of new business construction. That’s because amidst the economic challenges of the past several years the Iron Workers International Union ([www.ironworkers.org](http://www.ironworkers.org)) – teaming with the Ironworker Management Progressive Action Cooperative Trust (IMPACT) and the Ironworkers National Training Fund ([ironworkers.org/organization/Apprenticeship.aspx](http://ironworkers.org/organization/Apprenticeship.aspx)) – has invested heavily in worksite-ready training programs for union ironworkers.

In March, the Iron Workers Union announced an unprecedented alliance with IMPACT ([www.impact-net.org](http://www.impact-net.org)) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) ([osha.gov](http://osha.gov)), designed to help foster a positive working relationship between union ironworkers and OSHA inspectors. The partnership establishes a “National Training Partnership” to revise existing steel-erection training materials, creating eight new training modules. OSHA compliance officers will undertake specialized training at locations across the U.S.

IMPACT Region VI labor co-chair Marvin Ragsdale says the Iron Workers Union’s iron-clad commitment to the highest jobsite-safety standards helps protect ironworkers’ health, and make jobs more profitable by reducing downtime and controlling injury-related costs.

Real-world results back-up the claim. For example, John Bosworth, president of Bosworth Steel Erectors Inc ([www.bosworthsteel.com](http://www.bosworthsteel.com)) and IMPACT Region VI management co-chair says “With union ironworkers on the job, we completed the Irving Convention Center, in Irving, TX, working 60,000 ironworker man hours without a single injury incident.”

Results like these are especially worth touting in a time of increased government attention to on-the-job safety. In 2010, for example, OSHA has increased its monitoring and enforcement of safety regulations in the construction industry. Ragsdale explains that the Iron Workers Union’s new training initiative enables OSHA inspectors to better evaluate how government safety standards are being met on the worksite – instead of relying on individual, varying interpretations of policy.

William Brown, president and CEO of Ben Hur Construction Company ([www.benhurconstruction.com](http://www.benhurconstruction.com)) and IMPACT National management co-chair, said the partnership signals a “unique opportunity for us to work closely with OSHA compliance personnel to illustrate [...] the quality of our training

facilities throughout the country [and] achieve consistent interpretation and enforcement of the OSHA Subpart R – Steel Erection standards.”

Additionally, the Iron Workers National Training Fund announced the curriculum for its 26th annual Ironworkers Instructors Training Program ([ironworkers.org/organization/Apprenticeship.aspx](http://ironworkers.org/organization/Apprenticeship.aspx)), designed to help ironworker instructors polish their teaching skills. Several new and revised course offerings were added in 2010 to approximately 50 existing classes. New courses include green awareness training, operating layout instruments, mathematics, conveyor installation, and industrial maintenance. IMPACT will host a Safety Insurance Seminar ([impact-net.org/NewsDetailsView.aspx](http://impact-net.org/NewsDetailsView.aspx)) onsite for signatory contractors to learn how to reduce insurance costs and enhance jobsite safety. The Instructors Training Program is scheduled for July 13-23 in Ann Arbor, MI.

Ragsdale, who also serves union ironworkers as president of the Iron Workers District Council of Texas and the Mid-South States ([www.ironworkerstxmidsouth.com](http://www.ironworkerstxmidsouth.com)), says union ironworkers present a real advantage to employers planning new construction projects. “With continuous, advanced training, today’s union ironworkers are more broadly skilled than ever before,” says Ragsdale. “Our unparalleled safety-training programs and industry-leading, drug-free-worksite initiatives create a true framework for contractors to confidently hire union ironworkers.”

Year-round, the Iron Workers Union and IMPACT support training for union ironworkers-even between projects and through periods of unemployment. Through National Training Fund Regional Training Centers, ironworker instructors can attend train-the-trainer classes to help continually upgrade teaching skills.

Ironworker Joint Apprenticeship Training Committees (JATCs) provide multi-year apprenticeship programs to help train the next generation of union ironworkers. Ironworker apprentices compete in local, regional, and international events to demonstrate the skills they’ve learned. In June, the skills of a new generation of ironworkers were put to the test at the Iron Workers District Council of Texas and the Mid-South States District Council Apprenticeship Competition, hosted by Local 482 in Austin, TX, June 4-5.

Drawing contestants who won local competitions, the District Council Apprenticeship Competition comprises as many as eight skills tests. Each test measures proficiency in a different area of ironworking knowledge from welding to ornamental construction. These regional events prepare ironworkers for the biannual National Apprenticeship Competition ([ironworkers.org/events/apprcomp.aspx](http://ironworkers.org/events/apprcomp.aspx)), hosted by The National Training Fund and IMPACT. This year’s event will be held in Seattle, WA, September 17-20, 2010.

Based on their achievements in Austin, and last year’s competition in Houston, TX, two ironworkers from the District Council will compete against their peers from across the U.S. and Canada in Seattle this September. This year’s competitors are Kyle George of Local 48 ([www.ironworkers48.org](http://www.ironworkers48.org)), Oklahoma City, OK, who is currently employed by Allied Steel

([www.alliedsteelerectors.com](http://www.alliedsteelerectors.com)) in Oklahoma City, and Jake Crofford of Local 482 ([www.ironworkers482.org](http://www.ironworkers482.org)), Austin, who is employed by Precast Erectors in Hurst, TX.

“These competitions provide a fun, yet practical way for union ironworkers to demonstrate proficiency in a controlled environment-with some healthy competition from their peers,” says Greg Schulze, apprenticeship and training coordinator for the State of Texas. “They get to network with other ironworkers, and take home well-deserved recognition and maybe a nice trophy, too.”

#### **About the Iron Workers Union:**

The Iron Workers Union District Council of Texas and Mid-South States represents some 5,000 skilled union ironworkers who make up the area covered by IMPACT Region VI. These men and women help form the backbone of what the Iron Workers Union, its Signatory Contractor Associations, and IMPACT are doing to reinforce the construction industry’s future. To learn more, visit [www.ironworkerstxmidsouth.com](http://www.ironworkerstxmidsouth.com).

#### **About IMPACT:**

IMPACT ([www.impact-net.org](http://www.impact-net.org)) serves to unite union ironworkers and signatory contractors in partnerships to develop jobs in the United States and Canada. IMPACT programs help foster workplace excellence through customized project tracking, management training, and safety insurance. IMPACT is a joint labor-management, non-profit trust formed under Section 302(c) (9) of Labor-Management Relations (Taft-Hartley) Act.

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