

Verizon Begins Layoffs (While Still Providing Lousy Service)

In a move unprecedented for the Potomac Region, Verizon Communications is laying off 303 Cable Splicing Technicians, 42 General Clerks, 36 Maintenance Administrators, 29 Customer Service Clerks, 14 Office Clerical Assistants, 13 Management Planning Clerks and 7 Managers Clerks.

Article 35 of the CWA/Verizon General Agreement is entitled: Force Adjustment, Layoff, Part-timing and Rehiring After Layoff. It is easily one of the most complex articles in the contract and in the more than thirty years since the bulk of the present language was negotiated, it has never been used on this scale. In fact, dating back to the late 1950's before many of us were born, Verizon; then the C&P Telephone Company, has never had such a massive layoff. And this may just be the beginning.

For the past four years, Verizon has come out every three months with an Enhanced Income Security Plan offer. The consistent goal has been to downsize. Fortunately, the majority of our members have been (and still are) covered by the Job Security Letter protecting them from layoffs, forced transfers over 35 miles, or downgrades in job title. Unfortunately, in the last two rounds of bargaining with Verizon we have been unsuccessful in extending that protection to people hired after August 3, 2003. That is the group currently in jeopardy.

Verizon announced a whole new round of Enhanced ISP offers on October 27, 2009. Simultaneous with that round of offers, several organizations under Mary Jane Johnston notified the Union that Verizon didn't believe the EISP offer would satisfy their force reduction needs and as a result, they were declaring an Article 35 force reduction.

The initial declaration included MA's and the various clerical titles as well as 303 Construction Cable Splicing Technicians. Section 1 of Article 35 states, in part, "...the Company shall determine the extent of the adjustment required, the effective date or dates thereof, and the job titles, work groups and localities affected." Section 3 states, in part "...the Company shall give at least ninety (90) days notice to the Union of its intention to make force adjustments and negotiate with the Union about the method or methods to be used. If an agreement as to the method or methods to be used is not reached by the Company and the Union within thirty (30) days from the date that the Company notified the Union, the Company may then proceed as hereinafter outlined in this Article."

So October 27th began the negotiating period for the surplus declaration.

Section 4 begins and states, in part, "...SECTION 4. Sixty (60) days prior to the effective date or dates of the force adjustment the Company shall inform the Union of any job vacancies which it determines are available to employees in the affected job titles, work groups and localities. The Company shall offer those vacancies which it determines are available to the affected regular employees, except regular term employees, (excluding those vacancies in jobs which would result in promotions for the affected employees) in seniority order, subject to the Company's determination of an employee's ability to perform satisfactorily the work in the vacancy of his choice. An employee shall have a maximum of seven (7) calendar days following the Company's offer in which to indicate his choice with respect to the available vacancy(ies).

... (c) If pursuant to this Section an affected employee is limited in his choice of an available job to either: (1) a work location which requires a change in residence; or (2) a lower paid job title or classification, ... the employee may elect not to accept such reassignment and shall be paid a termination allowance pursuant to Section 7 of this Article. Provided, however, that if such employee has five (5) or more years of net credited service, he may also elect, within seven (7) days prior to the force effective date, to claim the job of the employee having the least seniority of all employees in all work locations within a thirty-five (35) mile radius of the claimant's existing work location in the claimants job title..." (complete text may be found in your contract or on the Local 2108 website).

It soon became apparent that many of the Cable Splicing Technicians in Construction, who didn't have the protections because they were hired after August 3, 2003, did, however; meet the five year requirement for having the ability to claim a job or as it's commonly referred to, "bump". It also became obvious that approximately 106 of them not only would have the ability to bump but, just as importantly, they would have someone within 35 miles that they could bump. This left the undesirable result that the person they would be bumping would potentially be leaving the payroll never having had the opportunity for the Enhanced ISP offer with the Voluntary Termination Bonus. As a result, Verizon reduced the surplus target number of CST's in Construction to the corresponding number of I&M Cable Splicing Technicians they would be bumping. This will at least provide the "bumped" Cable Splicers with the opportunity for the Enhanced ISP with the Voluntary Termination Bonus prior to layoff.

At this point in the process, of the 444 people targeted in this layoff, 337 of them should have received their Job Canvass Sheets. These sheets are the method being used by the Company to satisfy the requirement in Section 4 that states, in part, "...the Company shall inform the Union of any job vacancies which it determines are available to employees in the affected job titles, work groups and localities. The Company shall offer those vacancies which it determines are available to the affected regular employees...". The sheets must be returned to the company by December 7th. They will be collated and in seniority order, jobs offers will be made based on the priority each individual indicated for each job listed on the canvass sheet.

In the meantime, the second EISP offer for the I&M Cable Splicing Technicians will be mailed on December 8th with January 14th as the deadline for notification to Verizon for anyone interested in accepting the EISP offer. On December 16th the canvass sheets for the second Article 35 surplus for the I&M Splicers will be distributed with the available jobs and those must be returned by December 23rd. December 20th is the off payroll date for those who voluntarily accepted the first EISP and on January 14, 2010. The off payroll date for the second EISP offer is January 24, 2010.

On January 23, 2010 bumping may begin for those people with more than five years of service who have someone junior to them within 35 miles in their same job title or job classification (wage schedule) for those involved in the first Article 35. In order to bump someone in a different job classification you must have previously held that job. We anticipate that very few people will have either the ability or the opportunity to bump. The force effective date (removed from the payroll) for the first Article 35 is January 30, 2010 and the force effective date for the second Article 35 is February 20, 2010.

This layoff is nothing but corporate greed. Verizon obviously cares nothing about their customers considering the lousy service they've been providing them. They have fines to pay and rate increases they haven't received here in Maryland because of the consistent number of missed appointments and lengthy periods our customers are out of service. Yet, in the midst of this round of layoffs, Verizon has a proposed settlement before the Maryland Public Service Commission that will allow them to practically deregulate and raise their rates for Maryland customers. In the meantime, they are laying off the workers that could improve the quality of service for their customers.

CWA will hold a rally supporting our laid off brothers and sisters and protesting Verizons decision to layoff its workers. Mark your calendar for Saturday, December 19, 2009, 11:00am. We will be at Verizon - MD Headquarters at 1 East Pratt Street, Baltimore, Maryland. Go to www.cwalocal2108.org for details and to sign up to be on the bus to Baltimore.

"Once I shed myself of the burden of chasing the inflection point in access lines and say 'I don't care about that anymore, I am actually liberated'"

Ivan Seidenberg - CEO Verizon



President Les Evans with CWA Executive Vice President Annie Hill at the Chesapeake Complex for Customer Service Professionals Appreciation Week.

Speaking to a Goldman Sachs investor conference, Mr. Seidenberg said Verizon was simply no longer concerned with telephones connected with wires. In other words, this Verizon Boss is hanging up on the landline phone business.

Many of us saw this attitude a long time ago. I must admit, however; it's chilling to actually see it in print.

Verizon is no longer interested in being the "phone" company. It reminds me a little bit of people I've known through the years who didn't know how good they had something until it was gone. There is still a lot of money to be made selling telephone service. If there weren't you wouldn't see companies like Vonage trying so hard to do it.

Yet for Ivan Seidenberg, he's ready to walk away from it. Someone should give Ivan and all of his cronies a giant kick in the ass and say, "WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU THINKING? This is the business we are in!" Landline telephone service is the cash cow that built the wireless company and is building the FiOS network. Why are you giving it away?

Some years back, Verizon, then Bell Atlantic, commissioned a survey of customers and asked them three simple questions.

1. If you could receive your telephone and cable service from Bell Atlantic at a combined cost of five dollars more each month would you buy it? Forty-Five percent of those surveyed responded yes.
2. If you could receive your telephone and cable service from Bell Atlantic at the same combined cost each month would you buy it. Seventy-Five percent of those surveyed responded yes.
3. If you could receive your telephone and cable service from Bell Atlantic and save five dollars each month would you buy it. Eighty-Five percent of those surveyed responded yes.

Yet here we are in another round of EISP offers and now layoffs. This is not because we don't have the customers. We have more than we can take care of. We are doing it because Ivan has decided he doesn't need to be in the phone business anymore.

I believe it's time for Ivan and his buddies to wake up. They have taken a company whose customers had a very high satisfaction rate and completely trashed it. They lost sight of the most basic axiom of business, "If you make it your business to take care of customers, your customers will take care of your business".

Don't Tax Our Benefit Plans

The Senate Bill on Health Care Reform includes a provision that will tax our Union negotiated health care plans as much as \$7,800 between 2013 and 2019. The committees logic is that we should tax the so called, "Cadillac Plans" in order to pay for the reforms necessary to cover everyone.



President Les Evans with Marilyn Pratt-Givens and Patrick Pratt at President Obama's College Park Health Care Reform rally.

To begin with, what most union members, including CWA members have is not a "Cadillac". It's more like a Chevy. Secondly, it's not that we have too much; it's that everyone else has too little.

If you've been paying any attention at all to this debate, you have likely heard the media attacks on so-called "Cadillac" or "gold-plated" union health care plans. The better, collectively bargained health care benefits are really another reason why union membership is good for workers. In most cases, these union workers have traded better pay in exchange for better health care.

The aim of health care reform should be to raise the quality of care for everyone. It's not that union workers have too much; it's that others don't have enough coverage. Union workers lead the way in making good coverage the standard. Indeed, unions pioneered the first employer-paid health care plans that have become the norm for workers union and non-union.

It's these union-contract health plans that are most likely to be taxed under the Senate Finance Committees proposed excise tax. The tax will likely mean that older, sicker workers will have to look elsewhere for insurance. Taking away their benefits won't make anyone healthier. It will just make those workers poorer.

The reality about the proposed excise tax on health care benefits is that it would mean a tax increase for most union members. Communication Workers of America (CWA) points this out in their excellent report on the proposed tax. (<http://files.cwa-union.org/healthcarevoices/CWAExciseTaxReport.pdf>)

You should contact your members of Congress and ask them to vote for a health care reform bill WITHOUT the excise tax. Moreover, don't just go along with the false narrative about "Cadillac" plans. You should call them "so-called Cadillac plans" and point out that all Americans deserve access to excellent health care. Call (888) 580-0792 today and tell your Senator, "DON'T TAX MY HEALTHCARE".



Communications Workers of America Local 2108

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Recognizing Customer Service Professionals in a Tough Job

Customer service professionals participated in celebrations and other events at CWA worksites nationwide to mark Customer Service Professionals Month, a month long acknowledgment of the accomplishments and professionalism of customer service workers.

CWA Executive Vice President Annie Hill was on hand to talk with Customer Service Professional members of Local 2108 at one of



Local 2108 Vice President Marilyn Irwin, Local 2108 President Les Evans and CWA Executive Vice President Annie Hill visit with CWA members at the Verizon call center in Silver Spring, MD.

Verizon's call centers in Silver Spring, MD. "We want to grow our relationship with call center workers and expand participation in the union. That means expanding the ways in which we communicate and interact with customer service workers across our union," she said.

"Customer service professionals have a very difficult job and face many stress factors on the job. It is important to acknowledge their hard work, dedication and professionalism, especially this month, as unions around the world observe Customer Service Professionals Month," she added.

CWA LOCAL 2108 DELEGATE ELECTION GUIDELINES

Nominations for **at-large delegates** to the CWA International Annual Convention will be held at the **January 13, 2010** Membership Meeting. Nominees and those who nominate them must be members in good standing of our Local. Nominees must be present to accept the nomination, or must provide a signed letter of acceptance to the chair of the Election Committee prior to nominations. In the event the Membership Meeting is cancelled due to a snow emergency declaration in Prince Georges' County, nominations will be rescheduled for the next regularly scheduled Membership Meeting on February 10, 2010.

Candidates may submit a picture to the Local by December 18, 2009 to run in the January 2010 issue of the **2108News**. Ballots will be mailed on January 29 and counted on February 19, 2010. A declared snow emergency may delay ballot mailing and/or counting.

Candidates may have use of the Local's facilities for the purpose of mailing campaign literature to the membership beginning 30 days prior to nominations being scheduled. As membership list labels will no longer be printed, any candidate who wishes to mail campaign literature should furnish their envelopes or flyers to the Local. Within four business days the Local will print the names and addresses on the material. The Local will not furnish envelopes or postage. This and all other expenses are to be borne by the candidates.

The Local postage machine may not be used to affix postage to the envelopes. Arrangements for use of the Local facilities should be made with the Chair of the Election Committee, **Dedria Tyree**, who can be contacted through the Local office on (301) 595-2108. Use of the Local's facilities and campaigning may not be done on union-paid time.

A complete copy of the Local 2108 Election Committee Rules are available on our website (www.cwalocal2108.org) or by mail. Simply

Welcome to 2108

New Members

Jenone White

John Finklea
Kelli McCoy-Burkett
Diana Starkes
Cynthia Smith-Hickenbottom
Jacqueline Coleman

Mike Carter

Warren Winston
Jose Izaguirre
John A. Peters
Taye Woldemichael
Marcus Ragsdale

Transferred Members

Tina Mishou

Monica Crawley

Personals

We wish to extend sincere sympathy to the family and friends of:

Diane Joice Johnston, sister of **Lisa Johnston** who died on September 6, 2009.

Jamal and Tirrell Hubert, grandsons of **Traci Crawford** who died on October 8, 2009.

Kathy Harrison, a retired member and former President of RMC 2108, who died on December 8, 2009



Congratulations to Local 2108's newest stewards !! Pictured from left to right: (front row) Adrienne Brill, Lashonda Blackwell, Sheree Tunnell, Kareem Bryson, (middle row) Teresa Thomas, Bonnie Nukolczak, Angell Stargell, Amanda Brooks, (back row) Edward (Dean) Smith, Darrel Prather, David Broach & Leighton Shrouder

Retirees Corner

Calvin Foster, President RMC 2108

Our October meeting was full of questions about the bills that have been proposed on Capitol Hill concerning health care reform. We will not have the final bill to analyze for a while longer.

I think that all will agree that some reform is necessary, most of Capitol Hill does also.

The one concern that retirees should have is the Taxing of Health Care. Some Legislators have proposed this as a way to subsidize, health care reform. This could increase cost to workers and retirees. Reversing all health care improvements that workers fought for during their employment years .

If this concerns you, call your legislators and tell them. The Health Care you save could be ... **YOURS!**

Call the CWA hot line **1.888.580 0792** or the White House **202.224.3121**.



Same old song and dance from Verizon.



Don't Verizon customers deserve quality service?

Even in the worst economy in 70 years, Verizon has made \$4.3 billion in profits just this year. Despite this success, Verizon is eliminating hundreds of jobs that would help build our communications network, expand broadband to Maryland communities and maintain the quality service we all need.

To make matters worse, the Maryland Public Service Commission is considering a deal that would allow Verizon to continue its record of poor service to Maryland customers and could increase telephone rates.

The Maryland Public Service Commission already found that Verizon has a bad record of missed service appointments and delays in restoring service and that Verizon's workforce is "insufficient to affect repairs or to restore service."

Layoffs, poor service and increased telephone rates. Is this the future of telecommunications for Verizon customers in Maryland?

The PSC should reject this deal. It's good for Verizon but bad for Maryland.

Visit contactmdpsc.org

Join us in sending a message to the Maryland Public Service Commission:
Reject this deal and make Verizon clean up its act.

CWA The Union for the Communications Sec.
www.cwa.org

A message from Maryland members of the Communications Workers of America

Local 2108 Union Calendar

DECEMBER 2009

- 2 Chief Stewards Meeting - 9:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 4 CWA 2108 Holiday Gala
- 9 Retired Members Chapter Meeting 11:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 9 General Membership Meeting 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 12 Breakfast With Santa
- 25 Christmas Holiday
Local Office Closed



JANUARY 2010

- 1 New Year's Day
Local Office Closed
- 6 Chief Stewards Meeting - 9:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 7-9 Metro Baltimore Council AFL-CIO Leadership Conf.
Atlantic City, NJ
- 13 Retired Members Chapter Meeting, 11:00am
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 13 Membership Meeting & Delegate Election Nominations 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 27 Stewards Meeting 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD

SAVE THE DATES:
December 19th: --- Rally in Baltimore
January 13th: -- Delegate Election Nominations
January 27th - Stewards Meeting

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