

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

“As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.....”

CWA and Verizon have negotiated and extended many different agreements to address the deadly Coronavirus pandemic since March 13, 2020, and all of them began with these words.

Looking back, there were Work from Home (WFH) agreements, Home Garaging (HG) agreements, and (for a short time) Bonus pay for technicians who had to enter customers' premises. There were four different COVID leaves negotiated: 1) For those medically diagnosed with COVID-19, 2) For those who couldn't work from home and were directed by a doctor to remain out of the workplace due to an underlying health condition of their own or that of a family member, 3) For those who couldn't work because they were caring for a child whose school or daycare closed due to COVID-19 and for whom other childcare options were not available and 4) For those unable to work because they were caring for a person diagnosed with COVID-19 who was unable to provide self-care and for whom another caregiver was not available.

Additionally, agreements were reached to help with childcare since schools and most daycares were closed. The annual limit on the number of hours the Bright Horizons Back-up Care could be used (160) began to exclude all hours used during the pandemic. (Note: This is still in effect.) Due to the shortage of open daycare centers, an Emergency in-home backup care benefit of up to \$100 per day was provided to pay an adult (friend, relative, neighbor) to provide childcare while our members worked if no other care was available.

While this list is not all-inclusive, it illustrates how Verizon and CWA worked together to do the right thing to keep our members as safe as possible, while maintaining our jobs and providing service to our customers. The service that you all have provided during this pandemic has proven how essential you truly are, and you should be proud of that. It has allowed children to be taught from the safety of their homes, has allowed the sick and the elderly to have tele-health appointments with their doctors, and has given those who lost their jobs a way to apply for unemployment insurance. It has provided many Americans with their only avenue to stay in contact with friends and family during complete isolation. Because of our phones and internet access we were all able to order food, medicine and other necessities to be delivered to our doorsteps while avoiding possible exposure to the virus. Can you imagine surviving the past year without a phone and the internet???

To date not one member of CWA Local 2108 has lost their job or lost their life due to COVID-19. That's a powerful statement, and one I'm very proud of and thankful for. I think it proves that appropriate actions have been taken up to this point. As of the first of June, vaccines are now readily available to all over the age of twelve, and the CDC and states are lifting their COVID restrictions. Bars, restaurants, sporting



events and movie theatres are reopening at full capacity now. Mask mandates are being lifted in most places for those who are fully vaccinated. The airports are packed with people wanting to escape for a long-overdue vacation. If people can participate in all those activities and the COVID-positive rates continue to decrease, it's hard to argue that we can't return to our work places.

Many of our members have called or emailed to express their desire for our WFH agreement to be made permanent. They feel safer at home. They are productive at home and enjoy not having the distractions that working around others brings. The hours not spent sitting in traffic on the beltway during a long commute improves their work/home life balance. I understand every point made. But the WFH agreements were never intended to be permanent.....they were always “as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.....”



CWA representatives are in contact with VZ management often to ask about safety measures being put in place to keep our members safe when the time comes to return to the workplace. I was excited to learn that a new air handler system was installed at the Chesapeake Complex in February, and that the air filters being used are now one step below surgical-grade. From what I have read, upgrading the air handling system is probably the best improvement that can be made to keep us safe at this time. Different departments are also working to design work spaces that allow more space between employees, in the event CDC guidelines require that. Hand sanitizer stations have been installed and scheduled cleaning will increase before workers return.

At this point our WFH and Home Garaging agreements have been extended until the end of June. I hope that VZ sits with CWA for in-depth discussions and negotiations this month to determine if our members will be returning to the workplace. If they will, I hope all precautions VZ will take to make our workplaces safe will be spelled out, and a future return to work date will be communicated to our members in advance so you all can make your plans accordingly...for childcare, eldercare, transportation, etc. And while I believe it is a personal choice, I strongly urge our members who have not gotten the COVID vaccine to do so as soon as possible. The experts have said that being fully vaccinated will prevent us from getting sick enough to be hospitalized or die if we do contract the virus. It also protects those who are unable to be vaccinated, such as children under the age of twelve or those with health conditions that make the vaccine unsafe.

We've been through a lot during the past fifteen months....and we've made it this far. Let's continue to work together, care about each other and make good choices and, whether we are at home or in the office we'll get through this, too.

In solidarity,

Marilyn

Our members who work at Verizon and were first-hired as a union-represented associate before October 28, 2012 are part of the Verizon Pension Plan for Mid-Atlantic Associates. Your eligibility to retire and start receiving a service pension depends on your age and net credited service when you terminate employment. If you meet any of the following age and net credited service requirements, you may retire on or after that age and receive a service pension:

SERVICE PENSION ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

<u>Your Age</u>	<u>Net Credited Service</u>
Any age	30 years or more
At least age 50	25 years or more
At least age 55	20 years or more
At least age 60	15 years or more
Age 65 or older	10 years or more

A Service Pension can be paid out as a monthly annuity or as a Lump Sum, and your eligibility for a service pension also makes you and your dependents eligible for retiree medical and dental benefits. Those with at least five years in the pension plan, but not enough to be Service Pension-eligible, are entitled to a Deferred Vested Pension. A DVP is not nearly as much as a Service Pension, and it does not entitle you to retiree medical and dental benefits.

"The Rule of 75" is a myth that has floated around Verizon since the company was called C&P, and it just won't die. When you review the Service Pension Eligibility chart above, you will notice that 55 + 20, 60 + 15 and 65 + 10 all equal 75. Because of that many believe that if your age and years of service total 75 you are pension-eligible. Maybe.....Maybe not!!!! For example: If you are 50 years old with at least 25 years of service, you ARE service pension-eligible. However, if you are age 49 with 26 years of service you ARE NOT service pension-eligible, even though those numbers total 75.



I recently spoke with a financial advisor who had told one of our members that he was service pension-eligible in error. The member was 52 years old, with 24 years of service. Per the chart above, he is definitely NOT pension-eligible until he reaches 25 years of service. When I explained that our member was not service pension-eligible, the financial advisor argued with me about the "Rule of 75", since 52 + 24 = 76. He was as wrong as

two left shoes. If this member left the payroll now he would be QUITTING, not retiring. While he is entitled to a sizable Deferred Vested Pension now, it will be substantially larger next year when he reaches 25 years of service and service pension-eligibility. He will also be entitled to retiree medical and dental benefits if he waits until his 25th service anniversary to retire, but is entitled to none of that if he leaves now.

There are more financial advisors out there than there are McDonalds and Starbucks added together. Some are great, some are horrible, most are somewhere in between. Please do your due diligence when you select a financial advisor, to ensure that s/he is working in your best interest and doesn't just see \$\$\$ thanks to our defined benefit pension plan. Don't assume that they understand our benefits plans. Advocate for yourself. Summary Plan Descriptions of all our benefit

plans are posted on our website for your reference at any time (cwalocal2108.org). If you have a question, don't hesitate to call the Local and speak with an officer. Don't take a chance of QUITTING when you think you are RETIRING!!!

CWA Recognizes Juneteenth

During the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862. It became effective on January 1, 1863, declaring that all enslaved persons in the Confederate States of America in rebellion and not in Union hands were freed. The Proclamation applied to more than three million slaves. There is a common misconception among Americans that Lincoln freed the slaves with a stroke of his pen when he signed the Emancipation Proclamation, but, unfortunately, it wasn't that easy.

Shockingly it wasn't until two and a half years later, on **June 19, 1865** when Union Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, that the last slaves in the United States were informed of their freedom and that the Civil War had ended! Only after General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865 and the western Army of the Trans-Mississippi surrendered June 2, was Granger sent to the island of Galveston to take command of more than 2000 federal troops and enforce the emancipation of its slaves and oversee a peaceful transition of power.

Granger and his men marched through Galveston announcing the end of the Civil War and reading General Order No. 3 which advised that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves were free. This proclamation granted an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and declared that the connection between them became between employer and hired laborer. June 19th became the day that the quarter-million slaves who resided in Texas became aware that they had actually been freed more than two years earlier. It was truly a day of emancipation.....and it became known as **Juneteenth**. Juneteenth is considered the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States.

Of course Granger's announcement kicked off widespread celebrations across the state, which have continued in different ways to the present day. It is a legal state holiday only in Texas, but is recognized as a day of celebration in forty-seven states and the District of Columbia. Celebrations in the 21st century typically include prayer and religious services, speeches, educational events, picnics and festivals with plenty of good music, barbeque and dancing.

Juneteenth is a bittersweet holiday.... a time of celebration, but also a time of reflection and healing. In recognizing the history of American freedom, advocates say, Juneteenth is as deserving of recognition as Independence Day. "We may have gotten there in different ways and at different times," says the Rev. Ronald V. Meyers, chairman of the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation, when speaking of blacks and whites, "but you can't really celebrate freedom in America by just going with the Fourth of July." Happy Juneteenth to you all!



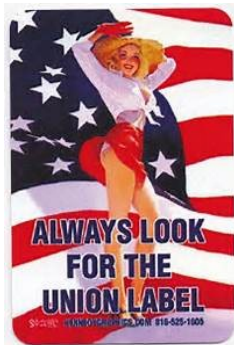


CWA Local 2108 has received a number of inquiries about when the next scheduled wage increase will take place at Verizon. The next scheduled wage increase will go into effect on June 20, 2021. A 2.5% increase will be applied to all wage steps in all wage tables of the current collective bargaining agreement.

Union Made For Father's Day

Celebrate your dad in solidarity style this Father's Day by getting him a gift that sports the union label. Check out some union-made Father's Day gift ideas:

- Jim Beam® (United Food and Commercial Workers [UFCW])
- Hugo Boss (UNITE HERE)
- Joseph Abboud Clothing (UNITE HERE)
- Klein Tools (Boilermakers [IBB])
- Knob Creek® Whiskey (UFCW)
- Louisville Slugger (UAW)
- Naturalizer Shoes (UFCW)
- Timex Watches (IAM)
- The Union Boot Pro (UFCW)
- Old Spice (UFCW)
- Pierre Cardin Cologne (UFCW)
- Red Wing Shoes (UFCW)
- Spalding Basketball (Machinists [IAM])
- Stella Artois Beer (IAM)



RMC 2108 Retirees Corner

The RMC 2108 Executive Board wants to encourage all of our members to continue to practice safe and healthy choices as the weather becomes favorable for more outside activity. As you well know, the virus is still active and we hope you will consult with your physician about getting the vaccination. Our health is very important to enjoying all that life has to offer.

The price of the Covid-19 vaccination may be free, but the cost of medicine that many of us use can be an issue. Prescription medications costs are now being discussed by legislators across the U.S and as retirees, we need to keep a close eye on these discussions. The CWA - RMC will play an active role on all issues that concern retirees and we hope you will continue to stay involved and have a say on decisions that may impact our quality of life. The 2108 RMC meetings are always informative on issues of interest to our members and a time to see each other. While we hope that by the end of summer we can return to in person meetings, we will continue to conduct our meetings via Zoom.

The next RMC meeting will be a Zoom meeting on June 09, 2021 at 11:00am. Information will be e-mailed to members prior to the meeting. If you have any login issues, please call Janice Crowe on 410 533-5370.

Stay Safe!



Calvin C Foster Jr
President- RMC 2108

Personals

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

Tania Parker, wife of **Lamin Parker** who passed away on April 25, 2021.

Welcome to Local 2108

New Members

Irving Hinton

Joel Schwartz

Transferred Members

Irving Hinton

Brian Barrow



Thinking About Retirement?

You may want to check out this important workshop presented by **Networth Financial** Group to see if the reality of retirement is on your horizon!!

5 Keys to a Happy, Fulfilling Retirement Webinar

Tuesday, June 1, 2021 at 6:30 PM - Please join this meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

To join by phone - Dial In: **(267) 831-0333** or **(301) 715-8592**

Webinar ID - 925 4819 1446 Password: 134679

Retirement - What to Expect Webinar

Thursday, June 10, 2021 at 6:30 PM - Please join this meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

To join by phone - Dial In: **(267) 831-0333** or **(301) 715-8592**.

Webinar ID - 984 8499 4749 Password: 134679

Reservations are required and to RSVP you may call Networth at (800)-859-2212, or register online at [Networth.net](https://www.networth.net).

CWA & Verizon Extend Covid-19 Agreements

CWA and Verizon have reached an agreement to extend an earlier COVID-19 agreement which will protect our members, while at the same time maintaining our network and providing service to our customers. The following agreements have been extended:

COVID-19 Home Garaging - Renewal - This agreement has been extended through June 30, 2021 for all eligible employees who are home garaging.

COVID-19 Work at Home Agreement: This agreement has been extended through June 30, 2021 for all eligible employees working from home. In addition, an associate may withdraw from work-at-home. If an associate does so, he/she will only be eligible to subsequently re-elect work-from-home at the Company's discretion.

The Company will honor an associate's notice to withdraw from work at-home as soon as practical (generally within 14 days but no more than 30 days). The Union and the company also agreed to specify that in the event that "face to face" feedback is required, such feedback will take place electronically.



New Program Helps Households Afford Broadband Service

Throughout the pandemic, CWA members who work in telecommunications have been keeping our country's broadband networks up and running. We have depended on these networks for work, school, healthcare, and other essential services. Last month, CWA announced it is working to help build consumer awareness about the Emergency Broadband Benefit, a new Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program. The temporary benefit will help to lower the cost of broadband service for eligible households during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

The \$3.2B Emergency Broadband Benefit program provides a discount of up to a \$50 per month toward broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for qualifying households on qualifying Tribal lands. The benefit also provides up to a \$100 per household discount toward a one-time purchase of a computer, laptop, or tablet if the household contributes more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase through a participating broadband provider.

A household is eligible if one member of the household meets at least *one* of the criteria below:

- Has an income that is at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or participates in certain assistance programs, such as SNAP, Medicaid or the FCC's Lifeline program;
- Approved to receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision, in the 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 school year;
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;
- Experienced a substantial loss of income through job loss or furlough since February 29, 2020 and the household had a total income in 2020 at or below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

Emergency Broadband Benefit enrollment opened on May 12, 2021. Eligible households can enroll through a participating broadband provider or directly with the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) using an online or mail-in application. Additional information about the Emergency Broadband Benefit is available at www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit, or by calling 833-511-0311 between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. any day of the week

Local 2108 Calendar

JUNE 2021

- 2 Chief Stewards Meeting - **Cancelled**
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 9 RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am - **Via Zoom**
- 9 Membership Meeting - 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD
- 20 Father's Day



JULY 2021

- 4 Independence Day
- 5 Independence Day Holiday Observed
Local Office Closed



- 14 RMC 2108 Meeting - 11:00am - **Via Zoom**
- 14 Membership Meeting - 6:00pm
Local Office, Beltsville, MD

WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated or have any effect on my personal working conditions, I respectfully request my union representative, officer or steward to be present at this meeting. Without union representation, I choose not to participate in this discussion.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: Membership Meeting - Wednesday, June 9, 2021 - 6:00pm
RMC 2108 Meeting - Wednesday, June 9, 2021 - 11:00am - Via Zoom



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LaTasha Carpenter - Vice President

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Amory Proctor - Executive Vice President

Marilyn Irwin - President

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